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A HISTORY  
OF  
OUR OWN TIMES  
*FIRST VOLUME*



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# A HISTORY OF OUR OWN TIMES

*FROM THE ACCESSION OF QUEEN VICTORIA  
TO THE BERLIN CONGRESS*

BY  
JUSTIN MCCARTHY



*IN FOUR VOLUMES—VOL. I.*

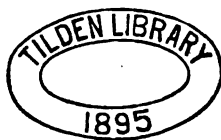
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מיון וסידור  
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OF

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# A HISTORY OF OUR OWN TIMES.

## CHAPTER I.

THE KING IS DEAD! LONG LIVE THE QUEEN!

BEFORE half-past two o'clock on the morning of June 20, 1837, William IV. was lying dead in Windsor Castle, while the messengers were already hurrying off to Kensington Palace to bear to his successor her summons to the throne. The illness of the King had been but short, and at one time, even after it had been pronounced alarming, it seemed to take so hopeful a turn that the physicians began to think it would pass harmlessly away. But the King was an old man—was an old man even when he came to the throne, and when the dangerous symptoms again exhibited themselves, their warning was very soon followed by fulfilment. The death of King William may be fairly regarded as having closed an era of our history. With him, we may believe, ended the reign of personal government in England. William was indeed a constitutional king in more



than mere name. He was to the best of his lights a faithful representative of the constitutional principle. He was as far in advance of his two predecessors in understanding and acceptance of the principle as his successor has proved herself beyond him. Constitutional government has developed itself gradually, as everything else has done in English politics. The written principle and code of its system it would be as vain to look for as for the British Constitution itself. King William still held to and exercised the right to dismiss his ministers when he pleased, and because he pleased. His father had held to the right of maintaining favourite ministers in defiance of repeated votes of the House of Commons. It would not be easy to find any written rule or declaration of constitutional law pronouncing decisively that either was in the wrong. But in our day we should believe that the constitutional freedom of England was outraged, or at least put in the extremest danger, if a sovereign were to dismiss a ministry at mere pleasure, or to retain it in despite of the expressed wish of the House of Commons. Virtually, therefore, there was still personal government in the reign of William IV. With his death the long chapter of its history came to an end. We find it difficult now to believe that it was a living principle, openly at work among us, if not openly acknowledged, so lately as in the reign of King William.

The closing scenes of King William's life were undoubtedly characterised by some personal dignity. As a rule sovereigns show that they know how to

die. Perhaps the necessary consequence of their training, by virtue of which they come to regard themselves always as the central figures in great state pageantry, is to make them assume a manner of dignity on all occasions when the eyes of their subjects may be supposed to be on them, even if the dignity of bearing is not the free gift of nature. The manners of William IV. had been, like those of most of his brothers, somewhat rough and overbearing. He had been an unmanageable naval officer. He had again and again disregarded or disobeyed orders, and at last it had been found convenient to withdraw him from active service altogether, and allow him to rise through the successive ranks of his profession by a merely formal and technical process of ascent. In his more private capacity he had, when younger, indulged more than once in unseemly and insufferable freaks of temper. He had made himself unpopular while Duke of Clarence by his strenuous opposition to some of the measures which were especially desired by all the enlightenment of the country. He was, for example, a determined opponent of the measures for the abolition of the slave trade. He had wrangled publicly, in open debate, with some of his brothers in the House of Lords; and words had been interchanged among the royal princes which could not be heard in our day even in the hottest debates of the more turbulent House of Commons. But William seems to have been one of the men whom increased responsibility improves. He was far better as a king than as a prince. He proved that he was able at

least to understand that first duty of a constitutional sovereign which, to the last day of his active life, his father, George III., never could be brought to comprehend—that the personal predilections and prejudices of the King must sometimes give way to the public interest.

Nothing perhaps in life became him like to the leaving of it. His closing days were marked by gentleness and kindly consideration for the feelings of those around him. When he awoke on June 18 he remembered that it was the anniversary of the battle of Waterloo. He expressed a strong, pathetic wish to live over that day, even if he were never to see another sunset. He called for the flag which the Duke of Wellington always sent him on that anniversary, and he laid his hand upon the eagle which adorned it, and said he felt revived by the touch. He had himself attended since his accession the Waterloo banquet; but this time the Duke of Wellington thought it would perhaps be more seemly to have the dinner put off, and sent accordingly to take the wishes of his Majesty. The King declared that the dinner must go on as usual, and sent to the Duke a friendly, simple message, expressing his hope that the guests might have a pleasant day. He talked in his homely way to those about him, his direct language seeming to acquire a sort of tragic dignity from the approach of the death that was so near. He had prayers read to him again and again, and called those near him to witness that he had always been a faithful believer in the truths of religion. He had

his despatch-boxes brought to him, and tried to get through some business with his private secretary. It was remarked with some interest that the last official act he ever performed was to sign with his trembling hand the pardon of a condemned criminal. Even a far nobler reign than his would have received new dignity if it closed with a deed of mercy. When some of those around him endeavoured to encourage him with the idea that he might recover and live many years yet, he declared with a simplicity which had something oddly pathetic in it that he would be willing to live ten years yet for the sake of the country. The poor King was evidently under the sincere conviction that England could hardly get on without him. His consideration for his country, whatever whimsical thoughts it may suggest, is entitled to some at least of the respect which we give to the dying groan of a Pitt or a Mirabeau, who fears with too much reason that he leaves a blank not easily to be filled. 'Young royal tarry-breeks,' William had been jocularly called by Robert Burns fifty years before, when there was yet a popular belief that he would come all right and do brilliant and gallant things, and become a stout sailor in whom a seafaring nation might feel pride. He disappointed all such expectations; but it must be owned that when responsibility came upon him he disappointed expectation anew in a different way, and was a better sovereign, more deserving of the complimentary title of patriot-king, than even his friends would have ventured to anticipate.

There were eulogies pronounced upon him after his death in both Houses of Parliament as a matter of course. It is not necessary, however, to set down to mere court homage or parliamentary form some of the praises that were bestowed on the dead King by Lord Melbourne and Lord Brougham and Lord Grey. A certain tone of sincerity, not quite free perhaps from surprise, appears to run through some of these expressions of admiration. They seem to say that the speakers were at one time or another considerably surprised to find that after all William really was able and willing on grave occasions to subordinate his personal likings and dislikings to considerations of State policy, and to what was shown to him to be for the good of the nation. In this sense at least he may be called a patriot-king. We have advanced a good deal since that time, and we require somewhat higher and more positive qualities in a sovereign now to excite our political wonder. But we must judge William by the reigns that went before, and not the reign that came after him; and, with that consideration borne in mind, we may accept the panegyric of Lord Melbourne and of Lord Grey, and admit that on the whole he was better than his education, his early opportunities, and his early promise.

William IV. (third son of George III.) had left no children who could have succeeded to the throne, and the crown passed therefore to the daughter of his brother (fourth son of George), the Duke of Kent. This was the Princess Alexandrina Victoria, who was born at Kensington Palace on May 24,

1819. The princess was therefore at this time little more than eighteen years of age. The Duke of Kent died a few months after the birth of his daughter, and the child was brought up under the care of his widow. She was well brought up: both as regards her intellect and her character her training was excellent. She was taught to be self-reliant, brave, and systematical. Prudence and economy were inculcated on her as though she had been born to be poor. One is not generally inclined to attach much importance to what historians tell us of the education of contemporary princes or princesses; but it cannot be doubted that the Princess Victoria was trained for intelligence and goodness.

‘The death of the King of England has everywhere caused the greatest sensation. . . . Cousin Victoria is said to have shown astonishing self-possession. She undertakes a heavy responsibility, especially at the present moment, when parties are so excited, and all rest their hopes on her.’ These words are an extract from a letter written on July 4, 1837, by the late Prince Albert, the Prince Consort of so many happy years. The letter was written to the Prince’s father, from Bonn. The young Queen had indeed behaved with remarkable self-possession. There is a pretty description, which has been often quoted, but will bear citing once more, given by Miss Wynn of the manner in which the young sovereign received the news of her accession to a throne. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Howley, and the Lord Chamberlain, the Marquis of Conyngham, left Windsor for

Kensington Palace, where the Princess Victoria had been residing, to inform her of the King's death. It was two hours after midnight when they started, and they did not reach Kensington until five o'clock in the morning. 'They knocked, they rang, they thumped for a considerable time before they could rouse the porter at the gate; they were again kept waiting in the courtyard, then turned into one of the lower rooms, where they seemed forgotten by everybody. They rang the bell, and desired that the attendant of the Princess Victoria might be sent to inform her Royal Highness that they requested an audience on business of importance. After another delay, and another ringing to inquire the cause, the attendant was summoned, who stated that the Princess was in such a sweet sleep that she could not venture to disturb her. Then they said, "We are come on business of state to the Queen, and even her sleep must give way to that." It did; and to prove that she did not keep them waiting, in a few minutes she came into the room in a loose white nightgown and shawl, her nightcap thrown off, and her hair falling upon her shoulders, her feet in slippers, tears in her eyes, but perfectly collected and dignified.' The Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, was presently sent for, and a meeting of the Privy Council summoned for eleven o'clock, when the Lord Chancellor administered the usual oaths to the Queen, and her Majesty received in return the oaths of allegiance of the Cabinet ministers and other privy councillors present. Mr. Greville, who was usually as little disposed to

record any enthusiastic admiration of royalty and royal personages as Humboldt or Varnhagen von Ense could have been, has described the scene in words well worthy of quotation.

‘The King died at twenty minutes after two yesterday morning, and the young Queen met the Council at Kensington Palace at eleven. Never was anything like the first impression she produced, or the chorus of praise and admiration which is raised about her manner and behaviour, and certainly not without justice. It was very extraordinary, and something far beyond what was looked for. Her extreme youth and inexperience, and the ignorance of the world concerning her, naturally excited intense curiosity to see how she would act on this trying occasion, and there was a considerable assemblage at the palace, notwithstanding the short notice which was given. The first thing to be done was to teach her her lesson, which, for this purpose, Melbourne had himself to learn. . . . She bowed to the lords, took her seat, and then read her speech in a clear, distinct, and audible voice, and without any appearance of fear or embarrassment. She was quite plainly dressed, and in mourning. After she had read her speech, and taken and signed the oath for the security of the Church of Scotland, the privy councillors were sworn, the two royal dukes first by themselves ; and as these two old men, her uncles, knelt before her, swearing allegiance and kissing her hand, I saw her blush up to the eyes, as if she felt the contrast between their civil and their natural relations, and this



was the only sign of emotion which she evinced. Her manner to them was very graceful and engaging ; she kissed them both, and rose from her chair and moved towards the Duke of Sussex, who was farthest from her, and too infirm to reach her. She seemed rather bewildered at the multitude of men who were sworn, and who came, one after another, to kiss her hand, but she did not speak to anybody, nor did she make the slightest difference in her manner, or show any in her countenance, to any individual of any rank, station, or party. I particularly watched her when Melbourne and the ministers, and the Duke of Wellington and Peel approached her. She went through the whole ceremony, occasionally looking at Melbourne for instruction when she had any doubt what to do, which hardly ever occurred, and with perfect calmness and self-possession, but at the same time with a graceful modesty and propriety particularly interesting and ingratiating.'

Sir Robert Peel told Mr. Greville that he was amazed at 'her manner and behaviour, at her apparent deep sense of her situation, and at the same time her firmness.' The Duke of Wellington said in his blunt way that if she had been his own daughter he could not have desired to see her perform her part better. 'At twelve,' says Mr. Greville, 'she held a Council, at which she presided with as much ease as if she had been doing nothing else all her life ; and though Lord Lansdowne and my colleague had contrived between them to make some confusion with the Council papers, she was not put out by it. She

looked very well ; and though so small in stature, and without much pretension to beauty, the gracefulness of her manner and the good expression of her countenance give her on the whole a very agreeable appearance, and with her youth inspire an excessive interest in all who approach her, and which I can't help feeling myself. . . . In short, she appears to act with every sort of good taste and good feeling, as well as good sense ; and as far as it has gone nothing can be more favourable than the impression she has made, and nothing can promise better than her manner and conduct do ; though,' Mr. Greville somewhat superfluously adds, 'it would be rash to count too confidently upon her judgment and discretion in more weighty matters.'

The interest or curiosity with which the demeanour of the young Queen was watched was all the keener because the world in general knew so little about her. Not merely was the world in general thus ignorant, but even the statesmen and officials in closest communication with court circles were in almost absolute ignorance. According to Mr. Greville, whose authority, however, is not to be taken too implicitly except as to matters which he actually saw, the young Queen had been previously kept in such seclusion by her mother—'never,' he says, 'having slept out of her bedroom, nor been alone with anybody but herself and the Baroness Lehzen'—that 'not one of her acquaintance, none of the attendants at Kensington, not even the Duchess of Northumberland, her governess, have any idea what

she is or what she promises to be.' There was enough in the court of the two sovereigns who went before Queen Victoria to justify any strictness of seclusion which the Duchess of Kent might desire for her daughter. George IV. was a Charles II. without the education or the talents; William IV. was a Frederick William of Prussia without the genius. The ordinary manners of the society at the court of either had a full flavour, to put it in the softest way, such as a decent taproom would hardly exhibit in a time like the present. No one can read even the most favourable descriptions given by contemporaries of the manners of those two courts without feeling grateful to the Duchess of Kent for resolving that her daughter should see as little as possible of their ways and their company.

It was remarked with some interest that the Queen subscribed herself simply 'Victoria,' and not, as had been expected, 'Alexandrina Victoria.' Mr. Greville mentions in his diary of December 24, 1819, that 'the Duke of Kent gave the name of Alexandrina to his daughter in compliment to the Emperor of Russia. She was to have had the name of Georgiana, but the duke insisted upon Alexandrina being her first name. The Regent sent for Lieven' (the Russian ambassador, husband of the famous Princess de Lieven), 'and made him a great many compliments, *en le persiflant*, on the Emperor's being godfather, but informed him that the name of Georgiana could be second to no other in this country, and therefore she could not bear it at all.' It was a very wise choice to employ

simply the name of Victoria, around which no ungenial associations of any kind hung at that time, and which can have only grateful associations in the history of this country for the future.

It is not necessary to go into any formal description of the various ceremonials and pageantries which celebrated the accession of the new sovereign. The proclamation of the Queen, her appearance for the first time on the throne in the House of Lords when she prorogued Parliament in person, and even the gorgeous festival of her coronation, which took place on June 28, in the following year, 1838, may be passed over with a mere word of record. It is worth mentioning, however, that at the coronation procession one of the most conspicuous figures was that of Marshal Soult, Duke of Dalmatia, the opponent of Moore and Wellington in the Peninsula, the commander of the Old Guard at Lützen, and one of the strong arms of Napoleon at Waterloo. Soult had been sent as ambassador-extraordinary to represent the French Government and people at the coronation of Queen Victoria, and nothing could exceed the enthusiasm with which he was received by the crowds in the streets of London on that day. The white-haired soldier was cheered wherever a glimpse of his face or figure could be caught. He appeared in the procession in a carriage, the frame of which had been used on occasions of state by some of the princes of the House of Condé, and which Soult had had splendidly decorated for the ceremony of the coronation. Even the Austrian ambassador, says an

eyewitness, attracted less attention than Soult, although the dress of the Austrian, Prince Esterhazy, 'down to his very boot heels sparkled with diamonds.' The comparison savours now of the ridiculous, but is remarkably expressive and effective. Prince Esterhazy's name in those days suggested nothing but diamonds. His diamonds may be said to glitter through all the light literature of the time. When Lady Mary Wortley Montagu wanted a comparison with which to illustrate excessive splendour and brightness, she found it in 'Mr. Pitt's diamonds.' Prince Esterhazy's served the same purpose for the writers of the early years of the present reign. It was therefore, perhaps, no very poor tribute to the stout old *moustache* of the Republic and the Empire to say that at a London pageant his war-worn face drew attention away from Prince Esterhazy's diamonds. Soult himself felt very warmly the genuine kindness of the reception given to him. Years after, in a debate in the French Chamber, when M. Guizot was accused of too much partiality for the English alliance, Marshal Soult declared himself a warm champion of that alliance. 'I fought the English down to Toulouse,' he said, 'when I fired the last cannon in defence of the national independence; in the meantime I have been in London, and France knows the reception which I had there. The English themselves cried "Vive Soult!"—they cried, "Soult for ever!" I had learned to estimate the English on the field of battle; I have learned to estimate them in peace; and I repeat that I am a warm partisan of the

English alliance.' History is not exclusively made by cabinets and professional diplomatists. It is highly probable that the cheers of a London crowd on the day of the Queen's coronation did something genuine and substantial to restore the good feeling between this country and France, and efface the bitter memories of Waterloo.

It is a fact well worthy of note amid whatever records of court ceremonial and of political change, that a few days after the accession of the Queen, Mr. Montefiore was elected Sheriff of London, the first Jew who had ever been chosen for that office; and that he received knighthood at the hands of her Majesty when she visited the City on the following Lord Mayor's day. He was the first Jew whom royalty had honoured in this country since the good old times when royalty was pleased to borrow the Jew's money, or order instead the extraction of his teeth. The expansion of the principle of religious liberty and equality which has been one of the most remarkable characteristics of the reign of Queen Victoria, could hardly have been more becomingly inaugurated than by the compliment which sovereign and city paid to Sir Moses Montefiore.

The first signature attached to the Act of Allegiance presented to the Queen at Kensington Palace, was that of her eldest surviving uncle, Ernest, Duke of Cumberland. The fact may be taken as an excuse for introducing a few words here to record the severance that then took place between the interests of this country, or at least the reigning family of these

realms, and another State, which had for a long time been bound up together in a manner seldom satisfactory to the English people. In the whole history of England it will be observed that few things have provoked greater popular dissatisfaction than the connection of a reigning family with the crown or rulership of some foreign State. There is an instinctive jealousy on such a point, which even when it is unreasonable is not unnatural. A sovereign of England had better be sovereign of England, and of no foreign State. Many favourable auspices attended the accession of Queen Victoria to the throne; some at least of these were associated with her sex. The country was in general disposed to think that the accession of a woman to the throne would somewhat clarify and purify the atmosphere of the Court. It had another good effect as well, and one of a strictly political nature. It severed the connection which had existed for some generations between this country and Hanover. The connection was only personal, the successive kings of England being also by succession sovereigns of Hanover.

The crown of Hanover was limited in its descent to the male line, and it passed on the death of William IV. to his eldest surviving brother, Ernest, Duke of Cumberland. The change was in almost every way satisfactory to the English people. The indirect connection between England and Hanover had at no time been a matter of gratification to the public of this country. Many cooler and more enlightened persons than honest Squire Western had viewed with

disfavour, and at one time with distrust, the division of interests which the ownership of the two crowns seemed almost of necessity to create in our English sovereigns. Besides it must be owned that the people of this country were not by any means sorry to be rid of the Duke of Cumberland. Not many of George III.'s sons were popular ; the Duke of Cumberland was probably the least popular of all. He was believed by many persons to have had something more than an indirect, or passive, or innocent share in the Orange plot, discovered and exposed by Joseph Hume in 1835, for setting aside the claims of the young Princess Victoria and putting himself, the Duke of Cumberland, on the throne ; a scheme which its authors pretended to justify by the preposterous assertion that they feared the Duke of Wellington would otherwise seize the crown for himself. His manners were rude, overbearing, and sometimes even brutal. He had personal habits which seemed rather fitted for the days of Tiberius, or for the court of Peter the Great, than for the time and sphere to which he belonged. Rumour not unnaturally exaggerated his defects, and in the mouths of many his name was the symbol of the darkest and fiercest passions, and even crimes. Some of the popular reports with regard to him had their foundation only in the common detestation of his character and dread of his influence. But it is certain that he was profligate, selfish, overbearing and quarrelsome. A man with these qualities would usually be described in fiction as at all events bluntly honest and



outspoken ; but the Duke of Cumberland was deceitful and treacherous. He was outspoken in his abuse of those with whom he quarrelled, and in his style of anecdote and jocular conversation ; but in no other sense. The Duke of Wellington, whom he hated, told Mr. Greville that he once asked George IV. why the Duke of Cumberland was so unpopular, and the King replied, ‘ Because there never was a father well with his son, or husband with his wife, or lover with his mistress, or friend with his friend, that he did not try to make mischief between them.’ The first thing he did on his accession to the throne of Hanover was to abrogate the constitution which had been agreed to by the Estates of the kingdom, and sanctioned by the late King, William IV. ‘ Radicalism,’ said the King, writing to an English nobleman, ‘ has been here all the order of the day, and all the lower class appointed to office were more or less imbued with these laudable principles. . . . But I have cut the wings of this democracy.’ He went indeed pretty vigorously to work, for he dismissed from their offices seven of the most distinguished professors of the University of Göttingen, because they signed a protest against his arbitrary abrogation of the constitution. Among the men thus pushed from their stools were—Gervinus, the celebrated historian and Shakespearian critic, at that time professor of history and literature ; Ewald, the orientalist and theologian ; Jacob Grimm ; and Frederick Dahlmann, professor of political science. Gervinus, Grimm and Dahlmann were not merely

deprived of their offices, but were actually sent into exile. The exiles were accompanied across the frontier by an immense concourse of students, who gave them a triumphant *Geleit* in true student fashion, and converted what was meant for degradation and punishment into a procession of honour. The offence against all rational principles of civil government in these arbitrary proceedings on the part of the new King was the more flagrant because it could not even be pretended that the professors were interfering with political matters outside their province, or that they were issuing manifestoes calculated to disturb the public peace. The University of Göttingen at that time sent a representative to the Estates of the kingdom, and the protest to which the seven professors attached their names was addressed to the academical senate, and simply declared that they would take no part in the ensuing election, because of the suspension of the constitution. All this led to somewhat serious disturbances in Hanover, which it needed the employment of military force to suppress.

It was felt in England that the mere departure of the Duke of Cumberland from this country would have made the severance of the connection with Hanover desirable, even if it had not been in other ways an advantage to us. Later times have shown how much we have gained by the separation. It would have been exceedingly inconvenient, to say the least, if the crown worn by a sovereign of England had been hazarded in the war between Austria and Prussia in 1866. Our reigning family must have

seemed to suffer in dignity if that crown had been roughly knocked off the head of its wearer who happened to be an English sovereign ; and it would have been absurd to expect that the English people could engage in a quarrel with which their interests and honour had absolutely nothing to do, for the sake of a mere family possession of their ruling house.

Looking back from this distance of time and across a change of political and social manners far greater than the distance of time might seem to explain, it appears difficult to understand the passionate emotions which the accession of the young Queen seems to have excited on all sides. Some influential and prominent politicians talked and wrote as if there were really a possibility of the Tories attempting a revolution in favour of the Hanoverian branch of the royal family ; as if some such crisis had again come round as that which tried the nation when Queen Anne died. On the other hand, there were heard loud and shrill cries that the Queen was destined to be conducted by her constitutional advisers into a precipitate pathway leading sheer down into popery and anarchy. The *Times* insisted that 'the anticipations of certain Irish Roman Catholics respecting the success of their warfare against Church and State under the auspices of these not untried ministers into whose hands the all but infant Queen has been compelled by her unhappy condition to deliver herself and her indignant people, are to be taken for nothing, and as nothing, but the chimeras of a band of visionary traitors.' The *Times* even thought it necessary to point out that for her

Majesty to turn papist, to marry a papist, 'or in any manner follow the footsteps of the Coburg family whom these incendiaries describe as papists,' would involve an 'immediate forfeiture of the British crown.' On the other hand, some of the Radical, and more especially Irish papers talked in the plainest terms of Tory plots to depose or even to assassinate the Queen and put the Duke of Cumberland in her place. O'Connell, the great Irish agitator, declared in a public speech that if it were necessary he could get 'five hundred thousand brave Irishmen to defend the life, the honour, and the person of the beloved young lady by whom England's throne is now filled.' Mr. Henry Grattan, the son of the famous orator, and like his father a Protestant, declared at a meeting in Dublin, that 'if her Majesty were once fairly placed in the hands of the Tories, I would not give an orange peel for her life.' He even went on to put his rhetorical declaration into a more distinct form: 'If some of the low miscreants of the party got round her Majesty and had the mixing of the royal bowl at night, I fear she would have a long sleep.' This language seems almost too absurd for sober record, and yet was hardly more absurd than many things said on what may be called the other side. A Mr. Bradshaw, Tory member for Canterbury, declared at a public meeting in that ancient city that the sheet-anchor of the Liberal Ministry was the body of 'Irish papists and raparees whom the priests return to the House of Commons.' 'These are the men who represent the bigoted savages, hardly more civilised than the natives of

New Zealand, but animated with a fierce, undying hatred of England. Yet on these men are bestowed the countenance and support of the Queen of Protestant England. For, alas ! her Majesty is Queen only of a faction, and is as much of a partisan as the Lord Chancellor himself.' At a Conservative dinner in Lancashire, a speaker denounced the Queen and her ministers on the same ground so vehemently, that the Commander-in-Chief addressed a remonstrance to some military officers who were among the guests at this excited banquet, pointing out to them the serious responsibility they incurred by remaining in any assembly when such language was uttered and such sentiments were expressed.

No one, of course, would take impassioned and inflated harangues of this kind on either side as a representation of the general feeling. Sober persons all over the country must have known perfectly well that there was not the slightest fear that the young Queen would turn a Roman Catholic, or that her Ministry intended to deliver the country up as a prey to Rome. Sober persons everywhere, too, must have known equally well that there was no longer the slightest cause to feel any alarm about a Tory plot to hand over the throne of England to the detested Duke of Cumberland. We only desire in quoting such outrageous declarations to make more clear the condition of the public mind, and to show what the state of the political world must have been when such extravagance and such delusions were possible. We have done this partly to show what were the trials

and difficulties under which her Majesty came to the throne, and partly for the mere purpose of illustrating the condition of the country and of political education. There can be no doubt that all over the country passion and ignorance were at work to make the task of constitutional government peculiarly difficult. A vast number of the followers of the Tories in country places really believed that the Liberals were determined to hurry the Sovereign into some policy tending to the degradation of the monarchy. If any cool and enlightened reasoner were to argue with them on this point and endeavour to convince them of the folly of ascribing such purposes to a number of English statesmen whose interests, position, and honour were absolutely bound up with the success and the glory of the State, the indignant and unreasoning Tories would be able to cite the very words of so great and so sober-minded a statesman as Sir Robert Peel, who in his famous speech to the electors of Tamworth promised to rescue the Constitution from being made the 'victim of false friends,' and the country from being 'trampled under the hoof of a ruthless democracy.' If, on the other hand, a sensible person were to try to persuade hot-headed people on the opposite side that it was absurd to suppose the Tories really meant any harm to the freedom and the peace of the country and the security of the succession, he might be invited with significant expression to read the manifesto issued by Lord Durham to the electors of Sunderland, in which that eminent statesman declared

that 'in all circumstances, at all hazards, be the personal consequences what they may,' he would ever be found ready when called upon to defend the principles on which the constitution of the country was then settled. We know now very well that Sir Robert Peel and Lord Durham were using the language of innocent metaphor. Sir Robert Peel did not really fear much the hoof of the ruthless democracy; Lord Durham did not actually expect to be called upon at any terrible risk to himself to fight the battle of freedom on English soil. But when those whose minds had been bewildered and whose passions had been inflamed by the language of the *Times* on the one side, and that of O'Connell on the other, came to read the calmer and yet sufficiently impassioned words of responsible statesmen like Sir Robert Peel and Lord Durham, they might be excused if they found rather a confirmation than a refutation of their arguments and their fears.

The truth is that the country was in a very excited condition, and that it is easy to imagine a succession of events which might in a moment have thrown it into utter confusion. At home and abroad things were looking ominous for the new reign. To begin with, the last two reigns had on the whole done much to loosen not only the personal feeling of allegiance, but even the general confidence in the virtue of monarchical rule. The old plan of personal government had become an anomaly, and the system of a genuine constitutional government, such as we know, had not yet been tried. The very manner in

which the Reform Bill had been carried, the political stratagem which had been resorted to when further resistance seemed dangerous, was not likely to exalt in popular estimate the value of what was then gracefully called constitutional government. Only a short time before the country had seen Catholic Emancipation conceded, not from a sense of justice on the part of ministers, but avowedly because further resistance must lead to civil disturbance. There was not much in all this to impress an intelligent and independent people with a sense of the great wisdom of the rulers of the country, or of the indispensable advantages of the system which they represented. Social discontent prevailed almost everywhere. Economic laws were hardly understood by the country in general. Class interests were fiercely arrayed against each other. The cause of each man's class filled him with a positive fanaticism. He was not a mere selfish and grasping partisan, but he sincerely believed that each other class was arrayed against his, and that the natural duty of self-defence and self-preservation compelled him to stand firmly by his own.



## CHAPTER II.

## STATESMEN AND PARTIES.

LORD MELBOURNE was the First Minister of the Crown when the Queen succeeded to the throne. He was a man who then and always after made himself particularly dear to the Queen, and for whom she had the strongest regard. He was of kindly, somewhat indolent nature; fair and even generous towards his political opponents; of the most genial disposition towards his friends. He was emphatically not a strong man. He was not a man to make good grow where it was not already growing, to adopt the expression of a great author. Long before that time his eccentric wife, Lady Caroline Lamb, had excused herself for some of her follies and frailties by pleading that her husband was not a man to watch over any one's morals. He was a kindly counsellor to a young Queen; and happily for herself the young Queen in this case had strong clear sense enough of her own not to be absolutely dependent on any counsel. Lord Melbourne was not a statesman. His best qualities, personal kindness and good nature apart, were purely negative. He was unfortunately not content even with the reputation for a sort of indolent good nature

which he might have well deserved. He strove to make himself appear hopelessly idle, trivial, and careless. When he really was serious and earnest he seemed to make it his business to look like one in whom no human affairs could call up a gleam of interest. He became the *fanfaron* of levities which he never had. We have amusing pictures of him as he occupied himself in blowing a feather or nursing a sofa-cushion while receiving an important and perhaps highly sensitive deputation from this or that commercial 'interest.' Those who knew him insisted that he really was listening with all his might and main; that he had sat up the whole night before studying the question which he seemed to think so unworthy of any attention; and that so far from being, like Horace, wholly absorbed in his trifles, he was at very great pains to keep up the appearance of a trifler. A brilliant critic has made a lively and amusing attack on this alleged peculiarity. 'If the truth must be told,' says Sydney Smith, 'our viscount is somewhat of an impostor. Everything about him seems to betoken careless desolation; anyone would suppose from his manner that he was playing at chuck-farthing with human happiness; that he was always on the heel of pastime; that he would giggle away the Great Charter, and decide by the method of teetotum whether my lords the bishops should or should not retain their seats in the House of Lords. All this is but the mere vanity of surprising, and making us believe that he can play with kingdoms as other men can with ninepins. . . . I am sorry to.

hurt any man's feelings, and to brush away the magnificent fabric of levity and gaiety he has reared ; but I accuse our minister of honesty and diligence ; I deny that he is careless or rash: he is nothing more than a man of good understanding and good principle disguised in the eternal and somewhat wearisome affectation of a political *roué*.'

Such a masquerading might perhaps have been excusable, or even attractive, in the case of a man of really brilliant and commanding talents. Lookers-on are always rather apt to be fascinated by the spectacle of a man of well-recognised strength and force of character playing for the moment the part of an indolent trifler. The contrast is charming in a brilliant Prince Hal or such a Sardanapalus as Byron drew. In our own time a considerable amount of the popularity of Lord Palmerston was inspired by the amusing antagonism between his assumed levity and his well-known force of intellect and strength of will. But in Lord Melbourne's case the affectation had no such excuse or happy effect. He was not by any means a Palmerston. He was only fitted to rule in the quietest times. He was a poor speaker, utterly unable to encounter the keen penetrating criticisms of Lyndhurst or the vehement and remorseless invectives of Brougham. Debates were then conducted with a bitterness of personality unknown, or at all events very rarely known, in our days. Even in the House of Lords language was often interchanged of the most virulent hostility. The rushing impetuosity and fury of Brougham's style had done much then to inflame

the atmosphere which in our days is usually so cool and moderate.

It probably added to the warmth of the attacks on the Ministry of Lord Melbourne that the Prime Minister was supposed to be an especial favourite with the young Queen. When Victoria came to the throne the Duke of Wellington gave frank expression to his feelings as to the future of his party. He was of opinion that the Tories would never have any chance with a young woman for sovereign. 'I have no small talk,' he said, 'and Peel has no manners.' It had probably not occurred to the Duke of Wellington to think that a woman could be capable of as sound a constitutional policy, and could show as little regard for personal predilections in the business of government as any man. All this, however, only tended to embitter the feeling against the Whig Government. Lord Melbourne's constant attendance on the young Queen was regarded with keen jealousy and dissatisfaction. According to some critics the Prime Minister was endeavouring to inspire her with all his own gay heedlessness of character and temperament. According to others, Lord Melbourne's purpose was to make himself agreeable and indispensable to the Queen ; to surround her with his friends, relations and creatures, and thus to get a lifelong hold of power in England, in defiance of political changes and parties. It is curious now to look back on much that was said in the political and personal heats and bitternesses of the time. If Lord Melbourne had been a French mayor of the palace, whose real object was

to make himself virtual ruler of the State, and to hold the Sovereign as a puppet in his hands, there could not have been greater anger, fear and jealousy. Since that time we have all learned on the very best authority that Lord Melbourne actually was himself the person to advise the Queen to show some confidence in the Tories—to ‘hold out the olive branch a little to them,’ as he expressed it. He does not appear to have been greedy of power, or to have used any unfair means of getting or keeping it. The character of the young Sovereign seems to have impressed him deeply. His real or affected levity gave way to a genuine and lasting desire to make her life as happy, and her reign as successful, as he could. The Queen always felt the warmest affection and gratitude for him, and showed it long after the public had given up the suspicion that she could be a puppet in the hands of a minister.

Still, it is certain that the Queen’s Prime Minister was by no means a popular man at the time of her accession. Even observers who had no political or personal interest whatever in the conditions of cabinets were displeased to see the opening of the new reign so much to all appearance under the influence of one who either was or tried to be a mere loungeur. The deputations went away offended and disgusted when Lord Melbourne played with feathers or dandled sofa-cushions in their presence. The almost fierce energy and strenuousness of a man like Brougham showed in overwhelming contrast to the happy-go-lucky airs and graces of the Premier. It is likely

that there was quite as much of affectation in the one case as in the other; but the affectation of a devouring zeal for the public service told at least far better than the other in the heat and stress of debate. When the new reign began the Ministry had two enemies or critics in the House of Lords of the most formidable character. Either alone would have been a trouble to a minister of far stronger mould than Lord Melbourne; but circumstances threw them both for the moment into a chance alliance against him.

One of these was Lord Brougham. No stronger and stranger a figure than his is described in the modern history of England. He was gifted with the most varied and striking talents, and with a capacity for labour which sometimes seemed almost superhuman. Not merely had he the capacity for labour, but he appeared to have a positive passion for work. His restless energy seemed as if it must stretch itself out on every side seeking new fields of conquest. The study that was enough to occupy the whole time and wear out the frame of other men was only recreation to him. He might have been described as one possessed by a very demon of work. His physical strength never gave way. His high spirits never deserted him. His self-confidence was boundless. He thought he knew everything and could do everything better than any other man. He delighted in giving evidence that he understood the business of the specialist better than the specialist himself. His vanity was overweening, and made him ridiculous almost as often and as much as his genius made him

admired. The comic literature of more than a generation had no subject more fruitful than the vanity and restlessness of Lord Brougham. He was beyond doubt a great Parliamentary orator. His style was too diffuse and sometimes too uncouth to suit a day like our own, when form counts for more than substance, when passion seems out of place in debate, and not to exaggerate is far more the object than to try to be great. Brougham's action was wild, and sometimes even furious ; his gestures were singularly ungraceful ; his manners were grotesque ; but of his power over his hearers there could be no doubt. That power remained with him until a far later date ; and long after the years when men usually continue to take part in political debate, Lord Brougham could be impassioned, impressive, and even overwhelming. He was not an orator of the highest class : his speeches have not stood the test of time. Apart from the circumstances of the hour and the personal power of the speaker, they could hardly arouse any great delight, or even interest ; for they are by no means models of English style, and they have little of that profound philosophical interest, that pregnancy of thought and meaning, and that splendour of eloquence, which make the speeches of Burke always classic, and even in a certain sense always popular among us. In truth no man could have done with abiding success all the things which Brougham did successfully for the hour. On law, on politics, on literature, on languages, on science, on art, on industrial and commercial enterprise, he professed to pronounce with the

authority of a teacher. 'If Brougham knew a little of law,' said O'Connell when the former became Lord Chancellor, 'he would know a little of everything.' The anecdote is told in another way too, which perhaps makes it even more piquant. 'The new Lord Chancellor knows a little of everything in the world—even of law.'

Brougham's was an excitable and self-asserting nature. He had during many years shown himself an embodied influence, a living speaking force in the promotion of great political and social reforms. If his talents were great, if his personal vanity was immense, let it be said that his services to the cause of human freedom and education were simply inestimable. As an opponent of slavery in the colonies, as an advocate of political reform at home, of law reform, of popular education, of religious equality, he had worked with indomitable zeal, with resistless passion, and with splendid success. But his career passed through two remarkable changes which to a great extent interfered with the full efficacy of his extraordinary powers. The first was when from popular tribune and reformer he became Lord Chancellor in 1830; the second was when he was left out of office on the reconstruction of the Whig Ministry in April 1835, and he passed for the remainder of his life into the position of an independent or unattached critic of the measures and policy of other men. It has never been clearly known why the Whigs so suddenly threw over Brougham. The common belief is that his eccentricities and his almost savage temper made him



intolerable in a cabinet. It has been darkly hinted that for a while his intellect was actually under a cloud, as people said that of Chatham was during a momentous season.

Lord Brougham was not a man likely to forget or forgive the wrong which he must have believed that he had sustained at the hands of the Whigs. He became the fiercest and most formidable of Lord Melbourne's hostile critics.

The other opponent who has been spoken of was Lord Lyndhurst. Lord Lyndhurst resembled Lord Brougham in the length of his career and in capacity for work, if in nothing else. Lyndhurst, who was born in Boston the year before the tea ships were boarded in that harbour and their cargoes flung into the water, has been heard addressing the House of Lords in all vigour and fluency by men who are yet far from middle age. He was one of the most effective Parliamentary debaters of a time which has known such men as Peel and Palmerston, Gladstone and Disraeli, Bright and Cobden. His style was singularly and even severely clear, direct and pure; his manner was easy and graceful; his voice remarkably sweet and strong. Nothing could have been in greater contrast than his clear, correct, nervous argument, and the impassioned invectives and overwhelming strength of Brougham. Lyndhurst had, as has been said, an immense capacity for work, when the work had to be done; but his natural tendency was as distinctly towards indolence as Brougham's was towards unrelenting activity. Nor were Lyndhurst's political convictions

ever very clear. By the habitude of associating with the Tories, and receiving office from them, and speaking for them, and attacking their enemies with argument and sarcasm, Lyndhurst finally settled down into all the ways of Toryism. But nothing in his varied history showed that he had any particular preference that way; and there were many passages in his career when it would seem as if a turn of chance decided what path of political life he was to follow. As a keen debater he was perhaps hardly ever excelled in Parliament; but he had neither the passion nor the genius of the orator; and his capacity was narrow indeed in its range when compared with the astonishing versatility and omnivorous mental activity of Brougham. As a speaker he was always equal. He seemed to know no varying moods or fits of mental lassitude. Whenever he spoke he reached at once the same high level as a debater. The very fact may in itself perhaps be taken as conclusive evidence that he was not an orator. The higher qualities of the orator are no more to be summoned at will than those of the poet.

These two men were without any comparison the two leading debaters in the House of Lords. Lord Melbourne had not at that time in the Upper House a single man of first class or even of second class debating power on the bench of the Ministry. An able writer has well remarked that the position of the Ministry in the House of Lords might be compared to that of a water-logged wreck into which enemies from all quarters are pouring their broadsides.

The accession of the Queen made it necessary that a new Parliament should be summoned. The struggle between parties among the constituencies was very animated, and was carried on in some instances with a recourse to manœuvre and stratagem such as in our time would hardly be possible. The result was not a very marked alteration in the condition of parties ; but on the whole the advantage remained with the Tories. Somewhere about this time, it may be remarked, the use of the word 'Conservative' to describe the latter political party first came into fashion. Mr. Wilson Croker is credited with the honour of having first employed the word in that sense. In an article in the 'Quarterly Review,' some years before, he spoke of being decidedly and conscientiously attached 'to what is called the Tory, but which might with more propriety be called the Conservative party.' During the elections for the new Parliament, Lord John Russell, speaking at a public dinner at Stroud, made allusion to the new name which his opponents were beginning to affect for their party. 'If that,' he said, 'is the name that pleases them, if they say that the old distinction of Whig and Tory should no longer be kept up, I am ready, in opposition to their name of Conservative, to take the name of Reformer, and to stand by that opposition.'

The Tories or Conservatives, then, had a slight gain as the result of the appeal to the country. The new Parliament on its assembling seems to have gathered in the Commons an unusually large number of gifted and promising men. There was something

too of a literary stamp about it, a fact not much to be observed in Parliaments of a date nearer to the present time. Mr. Grote, the historian of Greece, sat for the city of London. The late Lord Lytton, then Mr. Edward Lytton Bulwer, had a seat, an advanced Radical at that day. Mr. Disraeli came then into Parliament for the first time. Charles Buller, full of high spirits, brilliant humour, and the very inspiration of keen good sense, seemed on the sure way to that career of renown which a premature death cut short. Sir William Molesworth was an excellent type of the school which in later days was called the Philosophical Radical. Another distinguished member of the same school, Mr. Roebuck, had lost his seat, and was for the moment an outsider. Mr. Gladstone had been already five years in Parliament. The late Lord Carlisle, then Lord Morpeth, was looked upon as a graceful specimen of the literary and artistic young nobleman, who also cultivates a little politics for his intellectual amusement. Lord John Russell had but lately begun his career as leader of the House of Commons. Lord Palmerston was Foreign Secretary, but had not even then got the credit of the great ability which he possessed. Not many years before Mr. Greville spoke of him as a man who 'had been twenty years in office and had never distinguished himself before.' Mr. Greville expresses a mild surprise at the high opinion which persons who knew Lord Palmerston intimately were pleased to entertain as to his ability and his capacity for work. Only those who knew him very intimately

indeed had any idea of the capacity for governing Parliament and the country which he was soon afterwards to display. Sir Robert Peel was leader of the Conservative party. Lord Stanley, the late Lord Derby, was still in the House of Commons. He had not long before broken definitively with the Whigs on the question of the Irish ecclesiastical establishment, and had passed over to that Conservative party of which he afterwards became the most influential leader, and the most powerful parliamentary orator. O'Connell and Sheil represented the eloquence of the Irish national party. Decidedly the House of Commons first elected during Queen Victoria's reign was strong in eloquence and talent. Only two really great speakers have arisen in the forty years that followed, who were not members of Parliament at that time, Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright. Mr. Cobden had come forward as a candidate for the borough of Stockport, but was not successful, and did not obtain a seat in Parliament until four years after. It was only by what may be called an accident that Macaulay and Mr. Roebuck were not in the Parliament of 1837. It is fair to say, therefore, that, except for Cobden and Bright, the subsequent forty years have added no first class name to the records of Parliamentary eloquence.

The Ministry was not very strong in the House of Commons. Its conditions indeed hardly allowed it to feel itself strong even if it had had more powerful representatives in either house. Its adherents were but loosely held together. The more ardent

reformers were disappointed with ministers ; the Free Trade movement was rising into distinct bulk and proportions, and threatened to be formidably independent of mere party ties. The Government had to rely a good deal on the precarious support of Mr. O'Connell and his followers. They were not rich in debating talent in the Commons any more than in the Lords. Sir Robert Peel, the leader of the opposition, was by far the most powerful man in the House of Commons. Added to his great qualities as an administrator and a Parliamentary debater, he had the virtue, then very rare among Conservative statesmen, of being a sound and clear financier, with a good grasp of the fundamental principles of political economy. His high austere character made him respected by opponents as well as by friends. He had not perhaps many intimate friends. His temperament was cold, or at least its heat was self-contained ; he threw out no genial glow to those around him. He was by nature a reserved and shy man, in whose manners shyness took the form of pompousness and coldness. Something might be said of him like that which Richter said of Schiller : he was to strangers stony and like a precipice from which it was their instinct to spring back. It is certain that he had warm and generous feelings, but his very sensitiveness only led him to disguise them. The contrast between his emotions and his lack of demonstrativeness created in him a constant artificiality which often seemed mere awkwardness. It was in the House of Commons that his real genius and character displayed

themselves. The atmosphere of debate was to him what Macaulay says wine was to Addison, the influence which broke the spell under which his fine intellect seemed otherwise to lie imprisoned. Peel was a perfect master of the House of Commons. He was as great an orator as any man could be who addresses himself to the House of Commons, its ways and its purposes alone. He went as near perhaps to the rank of a great orator as anyone can go who is but little gifted with imagination. Oratory has been well described as the fusion of reason and passion. Passion always carries something of the imaginative along with it. Sir Robert Peel had little imagination, and almost none of that passion which in eloquence sometimes supplies its place. His style was clear, strong, and stately; full of various argument and apt illustration drawn from books and from the world of politics and commerce. He followed a difficult argument home to its utter conclusions; and if it had in it any lurking fallacy he brought out the weakness into the clearest light, often with a happy touch of humour and quiet sarcasm. His speeches might be described as the very perfection of good sense and high principle clothed in the most impressive language. But they were something more peculiar than this, for they were so constructed, in their argument and their style alike, as to touch the very core of the intelligence of the House of Commons. They told of the feelings and the inspiration of Parliament as the ballad-music of a country tells of its scenery and its national sentiments.

Lord Stanley was a far more energetic and impassioned speaker than Sir Robert Peel, and perhaps occasionally, in his later career, came now and then nearer to the height of genuine oratory. But Lord Stanley was little more than a splendid Parliamentary partisan, even when, long after, he was Prime Minister of England. He had very little indeed of that class of information which the modern world requires of its statesmen and leaders. Of political economy, of finance, of the development and the discoveries of modern science, he knew almost as little as it is possible for an able and energetic man to know who lives in the throng of active life and hears what people are talking of around him. He once said goodhumouredly of himself, that he was brought up in the pre-scientific period. His scholarship was merely such training in the classic languages as allowed him to have a full literary appreciation of the beauty of Greek and Roman literature. He had no real and deep knowledge of the history of the Greek and the Roman people, nor probably did he at all appreciate the great difference between the spirit of Roman and of Greek civilisation. He had, in fact, what would have been called at an earlier day an elegant scholarship ; he had a considerable knowledge of the politics of his time in most European countries, an energetic intrepid spirit, and with him, as Macaulay well said, the science of Parliamentary debate seemed to be an instinct. There was no speaker on the ministerial benches at that time who could for a moment be compared with him.



Lord John Russell, who had the leadership of the party in the House of Commons, was really a much stronger man than he seemed to be. He had a character for dauntless courage and confidence among his friends ; for boundless self-conceit among his enemies. Everyone remembers Sydney Smith's famous illustrations of Lord John Russell's unlimited faith in his own power of achievement. Thomas Moore addressed a poem to him at one time, when Lord John Russell thought or talked of giving up political life, in which he appeals to 'thy genius, thy youth, and thy name,' declares that the instinct of the young statesman is the same as 'the eaglet's to soar with his eyes on the sun,' and implores him not to 'think for an instant thy country can spare such a light from her darkening horizon as thou.' Later observers, to whom Lord John Russell appeared probably remarkable for a cold and formal style as a debater, and for lack of originating power as a statesman, may find it difficult to reconcile the poet's picture with their own impressions of the reality. But it is certain that at one time the reputation of Lord John Russell was that of a rather reckless man of genius, a sort of Whig Shelley. He had in truth much less genius than his friends and admirers believed, and a great deal more of practical strength than either friends or foes gave him credit for. He became, not indeed an orator, but a very keen debater, who was especially effective in a cold irritating sarcasm which penetrated the weakness of an opponent's argument like some dissolving acid. In the poem from which we have

quoted, Moore speaks of the eloquence of his noble friend as 'not like those rills from a height, which sparkle and foam and in vapour are o'er ; but a current that works out its way into light through the filtering recesses of thought and of lore.' Allowing for the exaggeration of friendship and poetry, this is not a bad description of what Lord John Russell's style became at its best. The thin bright stream of argument worked its way slowly out and contrived to wear a path for itself through obstacles which at first the looker-on might have felt assured it never could penetrate. Lord John Russell's swordsmanship was the swordsmanship of Saladin, and not that of stout King Richard. But it was very effective sword-play in its own way.

Our English system of government by party makes the history of Parliament seem like that of a succession of a great political duels. Two men stand constantly confronted during a series of years, one of whom is at the head of the Government, while the other is at the head of the Opposition. They change places with each victory. The conqueror goes into office ; the conquered into opposition. This is not the place to discuss either the merits or the probable duration of the principle of government by party ; it is enough to say here that it undoubtedly gives a very animated and varied complexion to our political struggles, and invests them indeed with much of the glow and passion of actual warfare. It has often happened that the two leading opponents are men of intellectual and oratorical powers so fairly balanced

that their followers may well dispute among themselves as to the superiority of their respective chiefs, and that the public in general may become divided into two schools not merely political but even critical, according to their partiality for one or the other. We still dispute as to whether Fox or Pitt was the greater leader, the greater orator ; it is probable that for a long time to come the same question will be asked by political students about Gladstone and Disraeli. For many years Lord John Russell and Sir Robert Peel stood thus opposed. They will often come into contrast and comparison in these pages. For the present it is enough to say that Peel had by far the more original mind, and that Lord John Russell never obtained so great an influence over the House of Commons as that which his rival long enjoyed. The heat of political passion afterwards induced a bitter critic to accuse Peel of lack of originality because he assimilated readily and turned to account the ideas of other men. Not merely the criticism, but the principle on which it was founded, was altogether wrong. It ought to be left to children to suppose that nothing is original but that which we make up, as the childish phrase is, 'out of our own heads.' Originality in politics, as in every field of art, consists in the use and application of the ideas which we get or are given to us. The greatest proof Sir Robert Peel ever gave of high and genuine statesmanship was in his recognition that the time had come to put into practical legislation the principles which Cobden and Villiers and Bright had been advocating in the House of

Commons. Lord John Russell was a born reformer. He had sat at the feet of Fox. He was cradled in the principles of Liberalism. He held faithfully to his creed ; he was one of its boldest and keenest champions. He had great advantages over Peel, in the mere fact that he had begun his education in a more enlightened school. But he wanted passion quite as much as Peel did, and remained still farther than Peel below the level of the genuine orator. Russell, as we have said, had not long held the post of leader of the House of Commons when the first Parliament of Queen Victoria assembled. He was still, in a manner, on trial ; and even among his friends, perhaps especially among his friends, there were whispers that his confidence in himself was greater than his capacity for leadership.

After the chiefs of Ministry and of Opposition, the most conspicuous figure in the House of Commons was the colossal form of O'Connell, the great Irish agitator, of whom we shall hear a good deal more. Among the foremost orators of the House at that time was O'Connell's impassioned lieutenant, Richard Lalor Sheil. It is curious how little is now remembered of Sheil, whom so many well qualified authorities declared to be a genuine orator. Lord Beaconsfield, in one of his novels, speaks of Sheil's eloquence in terms of the highest praise, and disparages Canning. It is but a short time since Mr. Gladstone selected Sheil as one of three remarkable illustrations of great success as a speaker achieved in spite of serious defects of voice and delivery ; the other

two examples being Dr. Chalmers and Dr. Newman. Mr. Gladstone described Sheil's voice as like nothing but the sound produced by 'a tin kettle battered about from place to place,' knocking first against one side and then against another. 'In anybody else,' Mr. Gladstone went on to say, 'I would not, if it had been in my choice, like to have listened to that voice ; but in him I would not have changed it, for it was part of a most remarkable whole, and nobody ever felt it painful while listening to it. He was a great orator, and an orator of much preparation, I believe, carried even to words, with a very vivid imagination and an enormous power of language, and of strong feeling. There was a peculiar character, a sort of half wildness in his aspect and delivery ; his whole figure, and his delivery and his voice and his matter were all in such perfect keeping with one another that they formed a great Parliamentary picture ; and although it is now thirty-five years since I heard Mr. Sheil, my recollection of him is just as vivid as if I had been listening to him to-day.' This surely is a picture of a great orator, as Mr. Gladstone says Sheil was. Nor is it easy to understand how a man without being a great orator could have persuaded two experts of such very different schools, as Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Disraeli, that he deserved such a name. Yet the after years have in a curious but unmistakable way denied the claims of Sheil. Perhaps it is because, if he really was an orator, he was that and nothing more, that our practical age, finding no mark left by him on Parliament or politics, has declined to

take much account even of his eloquence. His career faded away into second-class ministerial office, and closed at last, somewhat prematurely, in the little court of Florence, where he was sent as the representative of England. He is worth mentioning here because he had the promise of a splendid reputation ; because the charm of his eloquence evidently lingered long in the memories of those to whom it was once familiar, and because his is one of the most brilliant illustrations of that career of Irish agitator, which begins in stormy opposition to English government, and subsides after a while into meek recognition of its title and adoption of its ministerial uniform. O'Connell we have passed over for the present, because we shall hear of him again ; but of Sheil it is not necessary that we should hear any more.

This was evidently a remarkable Parliament, with Russell for the leader of one party, and Peel for the leader of another ; with O'Connell and Sheil as independent supporters of the Ministry ; with Mr. Gladstone still comparatively new to public life, and Mr. Disraeli to address the Commons for the first time ; with Palmerston still unrecognised and Stanley lately gone over to Conservatism, itself the newest invented thing in politics ; with Grote and Bulwer, and Joseph Hume and Charles Buller ; and Ward and Villiers, Sir Francis Burdett and Smith O'Brien, and the Radical Alcibiades of Finsbury, 'Tom' Duncombe.

## CHAPTER III.

## CANADA AND LORD DURHAM.

THE first disturbance to the quiet and good promise of the new reign came from Canada. The Parliament which we have described met for the first time on November 20, 1837, and was to have been adjourned to February 1, 1838 ; but the news which began to arrive from Canada was so alarming, that the Ministry were compelled to change their purpose and fix the reassembling of the Houses for January 16. The disturbances in Canada had already broken out into open rebellion.

The condition of Canada was very peculiar. Lower or Western Canada was inhabited for the most part by men of French descent, who still kept up in the midst of an active and moving civilisation most of the principles and usages which belonged to France before the Revolution. Even to this day, after all the changes, political and social, that have taken place, the traveller from Europe sees in many of the towns of Lower Canada an old-fashioned France, such as he had known otherwise only in books that tell of France before '89. Nor is this only in small sequestered towns and villages which the impulses of modern ways have yet failed to reach. In busy and trading

Montreal, with its residents made up of Englishmen, Scotchmen and Americans, as well as the men of French descent, the visitor is more immediately conscious of the presence of what may be called an old-fashioned Catholicism than he is in Paris, or even indeed in Rome. In Quebec, a city which for picturesqueness and beauty of situation is not equalled by Edinburgh or Florence, the curious interest of the place is further increased, the novelty of the sensations it produces in the visitor is made more piquant, by the evidences he meets with everywhere, through its quaint and steepy streets, and under its antiquated archways, of the existence of a society which has hardly in France survived the Great Revolution. At the opening of Queen Victoria's reign, the undiluted character of this French mediævalism was of course much more remarkable. It would doubtless have exhibited itself quietly enough if it were absolutely undiluted. Lower Canada would have dozed away in its sleepy picturesqueness, held fast to its ancient ways, and allowed a bustling giddy world, all alive with commerce and ambition, and desire for novelty and the terribly disturbing thing which un-resting people called progress, to rush on its wild path unheeded. But its neighbours and its newer citizens were not disposed to allow Lower Canada thus to rot itself in ease on the decaying wharfs of the St. Lawrence and the St. Charles. In the large towns there were active traders from England and other countries, who were by no means content to put up with old-world ways, and to let the magnifi-



cent resources of the place run to waste. Upper Canada, on the other hand, was all new as to its population, and was full of the modern desire for commercial activity. Upper Canada was peopled almost exclusively by inhabitants from Great Britain. Scotch settlers with all the energy and push of their country ; men from the northern province of Ireland, who might be described as virtually Scotch also, came there. The emigrant from the south of Ireland went to the United States because he found there a country more or less hostile to England, and because there the Catholic Church was understood to be flourishing. The Ulsterman went to Canada as the Scotchman did, because he saw the flag of England flying, and the principle of religious establishment which he admired at home still recognised. It is almost needless to say that Englishmen in great numbers were settled there, whose chief desire was to make the colony as far as possible a copy of the institutions of England. When Canada was ceded to England by France, as a consequence of the victories of Wolfe, the population was nearly all in the lower province, and therefore was nearly all of French origin. Since the cession the growth of the population of the other province had been surprisingly rapid, and had been almost exclusively the growth, as we have seen, of immigration from Great Britain, one or two of the colonising states of the European continent, and the American Republic itself.

It is easy to see on the very face of things some of the difficulties which must arise in the development

of such a system. The French of Lower Canada would regard with almost morbid jealousy any legislation which appeared likely to interfere with their ancient ways and to give any advantage or favour to the populations of British descent. The latter would see injustice or feebleness in every measure which did not assist them in developing their more energetic ideas. The home Government in such a condition of things often has especial trouble with those whom we may call its own people. Their very loyalty to the institutions of the old country impels them to be unreasonable and exacting. It is not easy to make them understand why they should not be at the least encouraged, if not indeed actually enabled, to carry boldly out the Anglicising policy which they clearly see is to be for the good of the colony in the end. The Government has all the difficulty that the mother of a household has when, with the best intentions and the most conscientious resolve to act impartially, she is called upon to manage her own children and the children of her husband's former marriage. Every word she says, every resolve she is induced to acknowledge, is liable to be regarded with jealousy and dissatisfaction on the one side as well as on the other. 'You are doing everything to favour your own children,' the one set cry out. 'You ought to do something more for your own children,' is the equally querulous remonstrance of the other.

It would have been difficult, therefore, for the home Government, however wise and far-seeing their policy, to make the wheels of any system run smoothly

at once in such a colony as Canada. But their policy certainly does not seem to have been either wise or far-seeing. The plan of government adopted looks as if it were especially devised to bring out into sharp relief all the antagonisms that were natural to the existing state of things. By an Act called the Constitution of 1791, Canada was divided into two provinces, the Upper and the Lower. Each province had a separate system of government, consisting of a governor, an executive council appointed by the Crown, and supposed in some way to resemble the Privy Council of this country; a legislative council, the members of which were appointed by the Crown for life; and a representative assembly, the members of which were elected for four years. At the same time the clergy reserves were established by Parliament. One-seventh of the waste lands of the colony was set aside for the maintenance of the Protestant clergy, a fruitful source of disturbance and ill-feeling.

When the two provinces were divided in 1791 the intention was that they should remain distinct in fact as well as in name. It was hoped that Lower Canada would remain altogether French, and that Upper Canada would be exclusively English. Then it was thought that they might be governed on their separate systems as securely and with as little trouble as we now govern the Mauritius on one system and Malta on another. Those who formed such an idea do not seem to have taken any counsel with geography. The one fact, that Upper Canada can hardly be said to have any means of communication with

Europe and the whole Eastern world except through Lower Canada, or else through the United States, ought to have settled the question at once. It was in Lower Canada that the greatest difficulties arose. A constant antagonism grew up between the majority of the legislative council, who were nominees of the Crown, and the majority of the representative assembly, who were elected by the population of the province. The home Government encouraged and indeed kept up that most odious and dangerous of all instruments for the supposed management of a colony—a 'British party' devoted to the so-called interests of the mother country, and obedient to the word of command from their masters and patrons at home. The majority in the legislative council constantly thwarted the resolutions of the vast majority of the popular assembly. Disputes arose as to the voting of supplies. The Government retained in their service officials whom the representative assembly had condemned, and insisted on the right to pay them their salaries out of certain funds of the colony. The representative assembly took to stopping the supplies, and the Government claimed the right to counteract this measure by appropriating to the purpose such public moneys as happened to be within their reach at the time. The colony—for indeed on these subjects the population of Lower Canada, right or wrong, was so near to being of one mind that we may take the declarations of public meetings as representing the colony—demanded that the legislative council should be made elective, and that the colonial government should

not be allowed to dispose of the moneys of the colony at their pleasure. The House of Commons and the Government here replied by refusing to listen to the proposal to make the legislative council an elective body, and authorising the provincial government without the consent of the colonial representation to appropriate the money in the treasury for the administration of justice and the maintenance of the executive system. This was in plain words to announce to the French population, who made up the vast majority, and whom we had taught to believe in the representative form of government, that their wishes would never count for anything, and that the colony was to be ruled solely at the pleasure of the little British party of officials and crown nominees. It is not necessary to suppose that in all these disputes the popular majority were in the right and the officials in the wrong. No one can doubt that there was much bitterness of feeling arising out of the mere differences of race. The French and the English could not be got to blend. In some places, as it was afterwards said in the famous report of Lord Durham, the two sets of colonists never publicly met together except in the jury-box, and then only for the obstruction of justice. The British residents complained bitterly of being subject to French law and procedure in so many of their affairs. The tenure of land and many other conditions of the system were antique French, and the French law worked, or rather did not work, in civil affairs side by side with the equally impeded British law in criminal matters. At last the representative assembly

refused to vote any further supplies or to carry on any further business. They formulated their grievances against the home Government. Their complaints were of arbitrary conduct on the part of the governors; intolerable composition of the legislative council, which they insisted ought to be elective; illegal appropriation of the public money; and violent prorogation of the provincial parliament.

One of the leading men in the movement which afterwards became rebellion in Lower Canada, was Mr. Louis Joseph Papineau. This man had risen to high position by his talents, his energy, and his undoubtedly honourable character. He had represented Montreal in the Representative Assembly of Lower Canada, and he afterwards became Speaker of the House. He made himself leader of the movement to protest against the policy of the governors, and that of the Government at home by whom they were sustained. He held a series of meetings, at some of which undoubtedly rather strong language was used, and too frequent and significant appeals were made to the example held out to the population of Lower Canada by the successful revolt of the United States. Mr. Papineau also planned the convening of a great convention to discuss and proclaim the grievances of the colonies. Lord Gosford, the governor, began by dismissing several militia officers who had taken part in some of these demonstrations; Mr. Papineau himself was an officer of this force. Then the governor issued warrants for the apprehension of many members of the popular Assembly on the charge of high

treason. Some of these at once left the country ; others against whom warrants were issued were arrested, and a sudden resistance was made by their friends and supporters. Then, in the manner familiar to all who have read anything of the history of revolutionary movements, the resistance to a capture of prisoners suddenly transformed itself into open rebellion.

The rebellion was not in a military sense a very great thing. At its first outbreak the military authorities were for a moment surprised, and the rebels obtained one or two trifling advantages. But the commander-in-chief at once showed energy adequate to the occasion, and used, as it was his duty to do, a strong hand in putting the movement down. The rebels fought with something like desperation in one or two instances, and there was, it must be said, a good deal of blood shed. The disturbance, however, after a while extended to the upper province. Upper Canada too had its complaints against its governors and the home Government, and its protests against having its offices all disposed of by a 'family compact ;' but the rebellious movement does not seem to have taken a genuine hold of the province at any time. There was some discontent ; there was a constant stimulus to excitement kept up from across the American frontier by sympathisers with any republican movement ; and there were some excitable persons inclined for revolutionary change in the province itself whose zeal caught fire when the flame broke out in Lower Canada. But it seems to have been an

exotic movement altogether, and so far as its military history is concerned, deserves notice chiefly for the chivalrous eccentricity of the plan by which the governor of the province undertook to put it down. The governor was the gallant and fanciful soldier and traveller, Sir Francis, then Major, Head. He who had fought at Waterloo and seen much service besides, was quietly performing the duties of Assistant Poor Law Commissioner for the county of Kent, when he was summoned, in 1835, at a moment's notice, to assume the governorship of Upper Canada. When the rebellion broke out in that province, Major Head proved himself not merely equal to the occasion, but boldly superior to it. He promptly resolved to win a grand moral victory over all rebellion then and for the future. He was seized with a desire to show to the whole world how vain it was for any disturber to think of shaking the loyalty of the province under his control. He issued to rebellion in general a challenge not unlike that which Shakespeare's Prince Harry offers to the chiefs of the insurrection against Henry IV. He invited it to come on and settle the controversy by a sort of duel. He sent all the regular soldiers out of the province to the help of the authorities of Lower Canada; he allowed the rebels to mature their plans in any way they liked; he permitted them to choose their own day and hour, and when they were ready to begin their assaults on constituted authority, he summoned to his side the militia and all the loyal inhabitants, and with their help he completely extinguished the



rebellion. It was but a very trifling affair; it went out or collapsed in a moment. Major Head had his desire. He showed that rebellion in that province was not a thing serious enough to call for the intervention of regular troops. The loyal colonists were for the most part delighted with the spirited conduct of their leader and his new-fashioned way of dealing with rebellion. No doubt the moral effect was highly imposing. The plan was almost as original as that described in Herodotus and introduced into one of Massinger's plays, when the moral authority of the masters is made to assert itself over the rebellious slaves by the mere exhibition of the symbolic whip. But the authorities at home took a somewhat more prosaic view of the policy of Sir Francis Head. It was suggested that if the fears of many had been realised and the rebellion had been aided by a large force of sympathisers from the United States, the moral authority of Canadian loyalty might have stood greatly in need of the material presence of regular troops. In the end Sir Francis Head resigned his office. His loyalty, courage and success were acknowledged by the gift of a baronetcy; and he obtained the admiration not merely of those who approved his policy, but even of many among those who felt bound to condemn it. Perhaps it may be mentioned that there were some who persisted to the last in the belief that Sir Francis Head was not by any means so rashly chivalrous as he had allowed himself to be thought, and that he had full preparation made, if his moral demonstration should fail, to

supply its place in good time with more commonplace and effective measures.

The news of the outbreaks in Canada created a natural excitement in this country. There was a very strong feeling of sympathy among many classes here—not, indeed, with the rebellion, but with the colony which complained of what seemed to be genuine and serious grievances. Public meetings were held at which resolutions were passed ascribing the disturbances in the first place to the refusal by the Government of any redress sought for by the colonists. Mr. Hume, the pioneer of financial reform, took the side of the colonists very warmly, both in and out of Parliament. During one of the Parliamentary debates on the subject, Sir Robert Peel referred to the principal leader of the rebellion in Upper Canada as 'a Mr. Mackenzie.' Mr. Hume resented this way of speaking of a prominent colonist, and remarked that 'there was a Mr. Mackenzie as there might be a Sir Robert Peel,' and created some amusement by referring to the declarations of Lord Chatham on the American Stamp Act, which he cited as the opinions of 'a Mr. Pitt.' Lord John Russell on the part of the Government introduced a bill to deal with the rebellious province. The bill proposed in brief to suspend for a time the constitution of Lower Canada, and to send out from this country a governor-general and high commissioner, with full powers to deal with the rebellion, and to remodel the constitution of both provinces. The proposal met with a good deal of opposition at first on

very different grounds. Mr. Roebuck, who was then, as it happened, out of Parliament, appeared as the agent and representative of the province of Lower Canada, and demanded to be heard at the bar of both the houses in opposition to the bill. After some little demur his demand was granted, and he stood at the bar, first of the Commons, and then of the Lords, and opposed the bill on the ground that it unjustly suspended the constitution of Lower Canada in consequence of disturbances provoked by the intolerable oppression of the home Government. A critic of that day remarked that most orators seemed to make it their business to conciliate and propitiate the audience they desired to win over, but that Mr. Roebuck seemed from the very first to be determined to set all his hearers against him and his cause. Mr. Roebuck's speeches were, however, exceedingly argumentative and powerful appeals. Their effect was enhanced by the singularly youthful appearance of the speaker, who is described as looking like a boy hardly out of his teens.

It was evident, however, that the proposal of the Government must in the main be adopted. The general opinion of Parliament decided not unreasonably that that was not the moment for entering into a consideration of the past policy of the Government, and that the country could do nothing better just then than send out some man of commanding ability and character to deal with the existing condition of things. There was an almost universal admission that the Government had found the right man when

Lord John Russell mentioned the name of Lord Durham.

Lord Durham was a man of remarkable character. It is a matter of surprise how little his name is thought of by the present generation, seeing what a strenuous figure he seemed in the eyes of his contemporaries, and how striking a part he played in the politics of a time which has even still some living representatives. He belonged to one of the oldest families in England. The Lambtons had lived on their estate in the north, in uninterrupted succession, since the Conquest. The male succession, it is stated, never was interrupted since the twelfth century. They were not, however, a family of aristocrats. Their wealth was derived chiefly from coal mines, and grew up in later days ; the property at first, and for a long time, was of inconsiderable value. For more than a century, however, the Lambtons had come to take rank among the gentry of the county, and some member of the family had represented the city of Durham in the House of Commons from 1727 until the early death of Lord Durham's father in December 1797. William Henry Lambton, Lord Durham's father, was a staunch Whig, and had been a friend and associate of Fox. John George Lambton, the son, was born at Lambton Castle in April 1792. Before he was quite twenty years of age, he made a romantic marriage at Gretna Green with a lady who died three years after. He served for a short time in a regiment of Hussars. About a year after the death of his first wife, he

married the eldest daughter of Lord Grey. He was then only twenty-four years of age. He had before this been returned to Parliament for the county of Durham, and he soon distinguished himself as a very advanced and energetic reformer. While in the Commons he seldom addressed the House, but when he did speak, it was in support of some measure of reform, or against what he conceived to be antiquated and illiberal legislation. He brought out a plan of his own for Parliamentary reform in 1821. In 1828 he was raised to the peerage with the title of Baron Durham. When the Ministry of Lord Grey was formed, in November 1830, Lord Durham became Lord Privy Seal. He is said to have had an almost complete control over Lord Grey. He had an impassioned and energetic nature, which sometimes drove him into outbreaks of feeling which most of his colleagues dreaded. Various highly coloured descriptions of stormy scenes between him and his companions in office are given by writers of the time. Lord Durham, his enemies and some of his friends said, bullied and browbeat his opponents in the Cabinet, and would sometimes hardly allow his father-in-law and official chief a chance of putting in a word on the other side, or in mitigation of his tempestuous mood. He was thorough in his reforming purposes, and would have rushed at radical changes with scanty consideration for the time or for the temper of his opponents. He had very little reverence indeed for what Carlyle calls the majesty of custom. Whatever he wished he strongly wished.

He had no idea of reticence, and cared not much for the decorum of office. It is not necessary to believe all the stories told by those who hated and dreaded Lord Durham, in order to accept the belief that he really was somewhat of an *enfant terrible* to the stately Lord Grey, and to the easy-going colleagues who were by no means absolutely eaten up by their zeal for reform. In the powerful speech which he delivered in the House of Lords on the Reform Bill, there is a specimen of his eloquence of denunciation which might well have startled listeners even in those days when the licence of speech was often sadly out of proportion with its legalised liberty. Lord Durham was especially roused to anger by some observations made in the debate of a previous night by the Bishop of Exeter. He described the prelate's speech as an exhibition of 'coarse and virulent invective, malignant and false insinuation, the grossest perversions of historical facts decked out with all the choicest flowers of pamphleteering slang.' He was called to order for these words, and a peer moved that they be taken down. Lord Durham was by no means dismayed. He coolly declared that he did not mean to defend his language as the most elegant or graceful, but that it exactly conveyed the ideas regarding the bishop which he meant to express ; that he believed the bishop's speech to contain insinuations which were as false as scandalous ; that he had said so ; that he now begged leave to repeat the words, and that he paused to give any noble lord who thought fit, an opportunity of taking them down. No one,

however, seemed disposed to encounter any farther this impassioned adversary, and when he had had his say, Lord Durham became somewhat mollified, and endeavoured to soften the pain of the impression he had made. He begged the House of Lords to make some allowance for him if he had spoken too warmly ; for, as he said with much pathetic force, his mind had lately been tortured by domestic loss. He thus alluded to the recent death of his eldest son—‘a beautiful boy,’ says a writer of some years ago, ‘whose features will live for ever in the well-known picture by Lawrence.’

The whole of this incident, the fierce attack and the sudden pathetic expression of regret, will serve well enough to illustrate the emotional, uncontrolled character of Lord Durham. He was one of the men who, even when they are thoroughly in the right, have often the unhappy art of seeming to put themselves completely in the wrong. He was the most advanced of all the reformers in the reforming Ministry of Lord Grey. His plan of Reform in 1821 proposed to give four hundred members to certain districts of town and country, in which every householder should have a vote. When Lord Grey had formed his reform Ministry, Lord Durham sent for Lord John Russell and requested him to draw up a scheme of reform. A committee was formed on Lord Durham’s suggestion, consisting of Sir James Graham, Lord Duncannon, Lord John Russell, and Lord Durham himself. Lord John Russell drew up a plan, which he published long after with the alterations which Lord Durham

had suggested and written in his own hand on the margin. If Lord Durham had had his way the Ballot would at that time have been included in the programme of the Government ; and it was indeed understood that at one period of the discussions he had won over his colleagues to his opinion on that subject. He was in a word the Radical member of the Cabinet, with all the energy which became such a character ; with that ' magnificent indiscretion ' which had been attributed to a greater man, Edmund Burke ; with all that courage of his opinions which, in the Frenchified phraseology of modern politics, is so much talked of, so rarely found, and so little trusted or successful when it is found.

Not long after Lord Durham was raised in the peerage and became an earl. His influence over Lord Grey continued great, but his differences of opinion with his former colleagues—he had resigned his office—became greater and greater every day. More than once he had taken the public into his confidence in his characteristic and heedless way. He was sent on a mission to Russia, perhaps to get him out of the way, and afterwards he was made ambassador at the Russian court. In the interval between his mission and his formal appointment he had come back to England and performed a series of enterprises which in the homely and undignified language of American politics would probably be called ' stumping the country.' He was looked to with much hope by the more extreme Liberals in the country, and with corresponding dislike and dread by all who thought the



country had gone far enough, or much too far, in the recent political changes.

None of his opponents, however, denied his great ability. He was never deterred by conventional beliefs and habits from looking boldly into the very heart of a great political difficulty. He was never afraid to propose what in times later than his have been called heroic remedies. There was a general impression, perhaps even among those who liked him least, that he was a sort of 'unemployed Cæsar,' a man who only required a field large enough to develop great qualities in the ruling of men. The difficulties in Canada seemed to have come as if expressly to give him an opportunity of proving himself all that his friends declared him to be, or of justifying for ever the distrust of his enemies. He went out to Canada with the assurance of everyone that his expedition would either make or mar a career, if not a country.

Lord Durham went out to Canada with the brightest hopes and prospects. He took with him two of the men best qualified in England at that time to make his mission a success—Mr. Charles Buller and Mr. Edward Gibbon Wakefield. He understood that he was going out as a dictator, and there can be no doubt that his expedition was regarded in this light by England and by the colonies. We have remarked that people looked on his mission as likely to make or mar a career, if not a country. What it did, however, was somewhat different from that which anyone expected. Lord Durham found out a new alternative. He made a country and he marred a

career. He is distinctly the founder of the system which has since worked with such gratifying success in Canada ; he is the founder even of the principle which allowed the quiet development of the provinces into a confederation with neighbouring colonies under the name of the Dominion of Canada. But the singular quality which in home politics had helped to mar so much of Lord Durham's personal career was in full work during his visit to Canada. It would not be easy to find in modern political history so curious an example of splendid and lasting success combined with all the appearance of utter and disastrous failure. The mission of Lord Durham saved Canada. It ruined Lord Durham. At the moment it seemed to superficial observers to have been as injurious to the colony as to the man.

Lord Durham arrived in Quebec at the end of May, 1838. He at once issued a proclamation, in style like that of a dictator. It was not in any way unworthy of the occasion, which especially called for the intervention of a brave and enlightened dictatorship. He declared that he would unsparingly punish any who violated the laws, but he frankly invited the co-operation of the colonies to form a new system of government really suited to their wants and to the altering conditions of civilisation. Unfortunately he had hardly entered on his work of dictatorship when he found that he was no longer a dictator. In the passing of the Canada Bill through Parliament the powers which he understood were to be conferred upon him had been considerably reduced. Lord

Durham went to work, however, as if he were still invested with absolute authority over all the laws and conditions of the colony. A very Cæsar laying down the lines for the future government of a province could hardly have been more boldly arbitrary. Let it be said also that Lord Durham's arbitrariness was for the most part healthy in effect and just in spirit. But it gave an immense opportunity of attack on himself and on the Government to the enemies of both at home. Lord Durham had hardly begun his work of reconstruction when his recall was clamoured for by vehement voices in Parliament.

Lord Durham began by issuing a series of ordinances intended to provide for the security of Lower Canada. He proclaimed a very liberal amnesty, to which, however, there were certain exceptions. The leaders of the rebellious movement, Papineau and others, who had escaped from the colony, were excluded from the amnesty. So likewise were certain prisoners who either had voluntarily confessed themselves guilty of high treason, or had been induced to make such an acknowledgment in the hope of obtaining a mitigated punishment. These Lord Durham ordered to be transported to Bermuda; and for any of these, or of the leaders who had escaped, who should return to the colony without permission he proclaimed that they should be deemed guilty of high treason and condemned to suffer death. It needs no learned legal argument to prove that this was a proceeding not to be justified by any of the ordinary forms of law. Lord Durham had no

power to transport anyone to Bermuda. He had no authority over Bermuda ; he had no authority which he could delegate to the officials of Bermuda enabling them to detain political prisoners. Nor had he any power to declare that persons who returned to the colony were to be liable to the punishment of death. It is not a capital offence by any of the laws of England for even a transported convict to break bounds and return to his home. All this was quite illegal; that is to say, was outside the limits of Lord Durham's legal authority. Lord Durham was well aware of the fact. He had not for a moment supposed that he was acting in accordance with ordinary English law. He was acting in the spirit of a dictator, at once bold and merciful, who is under the impression that he has been invested with extraordinary powers for the very reason that the crisis does not admit of the ordinary operations of law. For the decree of death to banished men returning without permission, he had indeed the precedent and authority of acts passed already by the colonial Parliament itself; but Lord Durham did not care for any such authority. He found that he had on his hands a considerable number of prisoners whom it would be absurd to put on trial in Lower Canada with the usual forms of law. It would have been absolutely impossible to get any unpacked jury to convict them. They would have been triumphantly acquitted. The authority of the Crown would have been brought into greater contempt than ever. So little faith had the colonists in the impartial working

of the ordinary law in the governor's hands, that the universal impression in Lower Canada was that Lord Durham would have the prisoners tried by a packed jury of his own officials, convicted as a matter of course, and executed out of hand. It was with amazement people found that the new governor would not stoop to the infamy of packing a jury. Lord Durham saw no better way out of the difficulty than to impose a sort of exile on those who admitted their connection with the rebellion, and to prevent by the threat of a severe penalty the return of those who had already fled from the colony. His amnesty measure was large and liberal ; but he did not see that he could allow prominent offenders to remain unrebuked in the colony ; and to attempt to bring them to trial would have been to secure for them, not punishment, but public honour.

Another measure of Lord Durham's was likewise open to the charge of excessive use of power. The act which appointed him prescribed that he should be advised by a council, and that every ordinance of his should be signed by at least five of its members. There was already a council in existence nominated by Lord Durham's predecessor, Sir J. Colborne ; a sort of provisional government put together to supply for the moment the place of the suspended political constitution. This council Lord Durham set aside altogether, and substituted for it one of his own making, and composed chiefly of his secretaries and the members of his staff. In truth this was but a part of the policy which he had marked out for

himself. He was resolved to play the game which he honestly believed he could play better than anyone else. He had in his mind, partly from the inspiration of the gifted and well-instructed men who accompanied and advised him, a plan which he was firmly convinced would be the salvation of the colony. Events have proved that he was right. His disposal of the prisoners was only a clearing of the decks for the great action of remodelling the colony. He did not allow a form of law to stand between him and his purpose. Indeed, as we have already said, he regarded himself as a dictator sent out to reconstruct a whole system in the best way he could. When he was accused of having gone beyond the law, he asked with a scorn not wholly unreasonable: 'What are the constitutional principles remaining in force where the whole constitution is suspended? What principle of the British Constitution holds good in a country where the people's money is taken from them without the people's consent; where representative government is annihilated; where martial law has been the law of the land, and where trial by jury exists only to defeat the ends of justice, and to provoke the righteous scorn and indignation of the community?'

Still there can be no doubt that a less impetuous and impatient spirit than that of Lord Durham might have found a way of beginning his great reforms without provoking such a storm of hostile criticism. He was, it must always be remembered, a dictator who only strove to use his powers for the restoration of liberty and constitutional government. His mode of

disposing of his prisoners was arbitrary only in the interests of mercy. He declared openly that he did not think it right to send to an ordinary penal settlement, and thus brand with infamy, men whom the public feeling of the colony entirely approved, and whose cause, until they broke into rebellion, had far more of right on its side than that of the authority they complained of could claim to possess. He sent them to Bermuda simply as into exile; to remove them from the colony, but nothing more. He lent the weight of this authority to the colonial Act, which prescribed the penalty of death for returning to the colony, because he believed that the men thus proscribed never would return.

But his policy met with the severest and most unmeasured criticism at home. If Lord Durham had been guilty of the worst excesses of power which Burke charged against Warren Hastings, he could not have been more fiercely denounced in the House of Lords. He was accused of having promulgated an ordinance which would enable him to hang men without any trial or form of trial. None of his opponents seemed to remember, that whether his disposal of the prisoners was right or wrong, it was only a small and incidental part of a great policy covering the readjustment of the whole political and social system of a splendid colony. The criticism went on as if the promulgation of the Quebec ordinances was the be-all and the end-all of Lord Durham's mission. His opponents made great complaint about the cost of his progress in Canada. Lord Durham had un-

doubtedly a lavish taste and a love for something like Oriental display. He made his goings about in Canada like a gorgeous royal progress ; yet it was well known that he took no remuneration whatever for himself, and did not even accept his own personal travelling expenses. He afterwards stated in the House of Lords that the visit cost him personally ten thousand pounds at least. Mr. Hume, the advocate of economy, made sarcastic comment on the sudden fit of parsimony which seemed to have seized, in Lord Durham's case, men whom he had never before known to raise their voices against any prodigality of expenditure.

The Ministry was very weak in debating power in the House of Lords. Lord Durham had made enemies there. The opportunity was tempting for assailing him and the Ministry together. Many of the criticisms were undoubtedly the conscientious protests of men who saw danger in any departure from the recognised principles of constitutional law. Eminent judges and lawyers in the House of Lords naturally looked above all things to the proper administration of the law as it existed. But it is hard to doubt that political or personal enmity influenced some of the attacks on Lord Durham's conduct. Almost all the leading men in the House of Lords were against him. Lord Brougham and Lord Lyndhurst were for the time leagued in opposition to the Government and in attack on the Canadian policy. Lord Brougham claimed to be consistent. He had opposed the Canada coercion from the beginning, he



said, and he opposed illegal attempts to deal with Canada now. It seems a little hard to understand how Lord Brougham could really have so far misunderstood the purpose of Lord Durham's proclamation as to believe that he proposed to hang men without the form of law. However Lord Durham may have broken the technical rules of law, nothing could be more obvious than the fact that he did so in the interest of mercy and generosity, and not that of tyrannical severity. Lord Brougham inveighed against him with thundering eloquence as if he were denouncing another Sejanus. It must be owned that his attacks lost some of their moral effect because of his known hatred to Lord Melbourne and the Ministry, and even to Lord Durham himself. People said that Brougham had a special reason for feeling hostile to anything done by Lord Durham. A dinner was given to Lord Grey by the Reformers of Edinburgh, in 1834, at which Lord Brougham and Lord Durham were both present. Brougham was called upon to speak, and in the course of his speech he took occasion to condemn certain too zealous Reformers who could not be content with the changes that had been made, but must demand that the Ministry should rush forward into wild and extravagant enterprises. He enlarged upon this subject with great vivacity and with amusing variety of humorous and rhetorical illustration. Lord Durham assumed that the attack was intended for him. His assumption was not unnatural. When he came in his turn to speak, he was indiscreet enough to reply

directly to Lord Brougham, to accept the speech of the former as a personal challenge, and in bitter words to retort invective and sarcasm. The scene was not edifying. The guests were scandalised. The effect of Brougham's speech was wholly spoiled. Brougham was made to seem a disturber of order by the indiscretion which provoked into retort a man notoriously indiscreet and incapable of self-restraint. It is not unfair to the memory of so fierce and unsparing a political gladiator as Lord Brougham, to assume that when he felt called upon to attack the Canadian policy of Lord Durham, the recollection of the scene at the Edinburgh dinner inspired with additional force his criticism of the Quebec ordinances.

The Ministry were weak and yielded. They had in the first instance approved of the ordinances, but they quickly gave way and abandoned them. They avoided a direct attempt on the part of Lord Brougham to reverse the policy of Lord Durham by announcing that they had determined to disallow the Quebec ordinances. Lord Durham learned for the first time from an American paper that the Government had abandoned him. He at once announced his determination to give up his position and to return to England. His letter announcing this resolve crossed on the ocean the despatch from home disallowing his ordinances. With characteristic imprudence he issued a proclamation from the Castle of St. Lewis, in the city of Quebec, which was virtually an appeal to the public feeling of the colony against the conduct of her Majesty's Government. When the news of this

extraordinary proclamation reached home, Lord Durham was called by the *Times* newspaper, 'the Lord High Seditious.' The representative of the Sovereign, it was said, had appealed to the judgment of a still rebellious colony against the policy of the Sovereign's own advisers. Of course Lord Durham's recall was unavoidable. The Government at once sent out a despatch removing him from his place as Governor of British North America.

Lord Durham had not waited for the formal recall. He returned to England a disgraced man. Yet even then there was public spirit enough among the English people to refuse to ratify any sentence of disgrace upon him. When he landed at Plymouth, he was received with acclamations by the population, although the Government had prevented any of the official honour usually shown to returning governors from being offered to him. Mr. John Stuart Mill has claimed with modest firmness and with perfect justice a leading share in influencing public opinion in favour of Lord Durham. 'Lord Durham,' he says in his *Autobiography*, 'was bitterly attacked from all sides, inveighed against by enemies, given up by timid friends ; while those who would willingly have defended him did not know what to say. He appeared to be returning a defeated and discredited man. I had followed the Canadian events from the beginning ; I had been one of the prompters of his prompters ; his policy was almost exactly what mine would have been, and I was in a position to defend it. I wrote and published a manifesto in the [Westminster] *Review*, in which I took the very

highest ground in his behalf, claiming for him not mere acquittal, but praise and honour. Instantly a number of other writers took up the tone. I believe there was a portion of truth in what Lord Durham soon after, with polite exaggeration, said to me, that to this article might be ascribed the almost triumphal reception which he met with on his arrival in England. I believe it to have been the word in season which at a critical moment does much to decide the result ; the touch which determines whether a stone set in motion at the top of an eminence shall roll down on one side or on the other. All hopes connected with Lord Durham as a politician soon vanished ; but with regard to Canadian and generally to colonial policy the cause was gained. Lord Durham's report, written by Charles Buller, partly under the inspiration of Wakefield, began a new era ; its recommendations, extending to complete internal self-government, were in full operation in Canada within two or three years, and have been since extended to nearly all the other colonies of European race which have any claim to the character of important communities.' In this instance the *victa causa* pleased not only Cato, but in the end the gods as well.

Lord Durham's report was acknowledged by enemies as well as by the most impartial critics to be a masterly document. As Mr. Mill has said, it laid the foundation of the political success and social prosperity not only of Canada but of all the other important colonies. After having explained in the most exhaustive manner the causes of discontent and back-

wardness in Canada, it went on to recommend that the government of the colony should be put as much as possible into the hands of the colonists themselves, that they themselves should execute as well as make the laws, the limit of the Imperial Government's interference being in such matters as affect the relations of the colony with the mother country, such as the constitution and form of government, the regulation of foreign relations and trade, and the disposal of the public lands. Lord Durham proposed to establish a thoroughly good system of municipal institutions ; to secure the independence of the judges ; to make all provincial officers, except the governor and his secretary, responsible to the colonial legislature ; and to repeal all former legislation with respect to the reserves of land for the clergy. Finally, he proposed that the provinces of Canada should be reunited politically and should become one legislature, containing the representatives of both races and of all districts. It is significant that the report also recommended that in any act to be introduced for this purpose, a provision should be made by which all or any of the other North American colonies should on the application of their legislatures and with the consent of Canada be admitted into the Canadian Union. Thus the separation which Fox thought unwise was to be abolished, and the Canadas were to be fused into one system, which Lord Durham would have had a federation. In brief, Lord Durham proposed to make the Canadas self-governing as regards their internal affairs, and the germ of a federal union.

It is not necessary to describe in detail the steps by which the Government gradually introduced the recommendations of Lord Durham to Parliament and carried them to success. Lord Glenelg, one of the feeblest and most apathetic of colonial secretaries, had retired from office, partly, no doubt, because of the attacks in Parliament on his administration of Canadian affairs. He was succeeded at the Colonial Office by Lord Normanby, and Lord Normanby gave way in a few months to Lord John Russell, who was full of energy and earnestness. Lord Durham's successor and disciple in the work of Canadian government, Lord Sydenham—best known as Mr. Charles Poulett Thomson, one of the pioneers of free trade—received Lord John Russell's cordial co-operation and support. Lord John Russell introduced into the House of Commons a bill which he described as intended to lay the foundation of a permanent settlement of the affairs of Canada. The measure was postponed for a session because some statesmen thought that it would not be acceptable to the Canadians themselves. Some little sputterings of the rebellion had also lingered after Lord Durham's return to this country, and these for a short time had directed attention away from the policy of reorganisation. In 1840, however, the Act was passed which reunited Upper and Lower Canada on the basis proposed by Lord Durham. Further legislation disposed of the clergy reserve lands for the general benefit of all churches and denominations. The way was made clear for that scheme which in

times nearer to our own has formed the Dominion of Canada.

Lord Durham did not live to see the success of the policy he had recommended. We may anticipate the close of his career. Within a few days after the passing of the Canada Government Bill he died at Cowes, in the Isle of Wight, on July 28, 1840. He was then little more than forty-eight years of age. He had for some time been in failing health, and it cannot be doubted that the mortification attending his Canadian mission had worn away his strength. His proud and sensitive spirit could ill bear the contradictions and humiliations that had been forced upon him. His was an eager and a passionate nature, full of that *sæva indignatio* which by his own acknowledgment tortured the heart of Swift. He wanted to the success of his political career that proud patience which the gods are said to love, and by virtue of which great men live down misappreciation, and hold out until they see themselves justified and hear the reproaches turn into cheers. But if Lord Durham's personal career was in any way a failure, his policy for the Canadas was a splendid success. It established the principles of colonial government. There were undoubtedly defects in the construction of the actual scheme which Lord Durham initiated, and which Lord Sydenham, who died not long after him, instituted. The legislative union of the two Canadas was in itself a makeshift, and was only adopted as such. Lord Durham would have had it otherwise if he might; but he did not see his

way then to anything like the complete federation scheme afterwards adopted. But the success of the policy lay in the broad principles it established, and to which other colonial systems as well as that of the Dominion of Canada owe their strength and security to-day. One may say, with little help from the merely fanciful, that the rejoicings of emancipated colonies might have been in his dying ears as he sank into his early grave.



## CHAPTER IV.

## SCIENCE AND SPEED.

THE opening of the reign of Queen Victoria coincided with the introduction of many of the great discoveries and applications in science, industry and commerce which we consider specially representative of modern civilisation. A reign which saw in its earlier years the application of the electric current to the task of transmitting messages, the first successful attempts to make use of steam for the business of Transatlantic navigation, the general development of the railway system all over these countries, and the introduction of the penny post, must be considered to have obtained for itself, had it secured no other memorials, an abiding place in history. A distinguished author has lately inveighed against the spirit which would rank such improvements as those just mentioned with the genuine triumphs of the human race, and has gone so far as to insist that there is nothing in any such which might not be expected from the self-interested contrivings of a very inferior animal nature. Amid the tendency to glorify beyond measure the mere mechanical improvements of modern civilisation, it is natural that there should arise some angry questioning, some fierce disparage-

ment of all that it has done. There will always be natures to which the philosophy of contemplation must seem far nobler than the philosophy which expresses itself in mechanical action. It may, however, be taken as certain that no people who were ever great in thought and in art wilfully neglected to avail themselves of all possible contrivances for making life less laborious by the means of mechanical and artificial contrivance. The Greeks were to the best of their opportunity, and when at the highest point of their glory as an artistic race, as eager for the application of all scientific and mechanical contrivances to the business of life as the most practical and boastful Manchester man or Chicago man of our own day. We shall afterwards see that the reign of Queen Victoria came to have a literature, an art, and a philosophy distinctly its own. For the moment we have to do with its industrial science; or at least with the first remarkable movements in that direction which accompanied the opening of the reign. This at least must be said for them, that they have changed the conditions of human life for us in such a manner as to make the history of the past forty or fifty years almost absolutely distinct from that of any preceding period. In all that part of our social life which is affected by industrial and mechanical appliances, the man of the latter part of the eighteenth century was less widely removed from the Englishman of the days of the Paston Letters than we are removed from the ways of the eighteenth century. The man of the eighteenth century travelled on land and sea in

much the same way that his forefathers had done hundreds of years before. His communications by letter with his fellows were carried on in very much the same method. He got his news from abroad and at home after the same slow uncertain fashion. His streets and houses were lighted very much as they might have been when Mr. Pepys was in London. His ideas of drainage and ventilation were equally elementary and simple. We see a complete revolution in all these things. A man of the present day suddenly thrust back fifty years in life, would find himself almost as awkwardly unsuited to the ways of that time as if he were sent back to the age when the Romans occupied Britain. He would find himself harassed at every step he took. He could do hardly anything as he does it to-day. Whatever the moral and philosophical value of the change in the eyes of thinkers too lofty to concern themselves with the common ways and doings of human life, this is certain at least, that the change is of immense historical importance, and that even if we look upon life as a mere pageant and show, interesting to wise men only by its curious changes, a wise man of this school could hardly have done better, if the choice lay with him, than to desire that the lines of his life might be so cast as to fall into the earlier part of this present reign.

It is a somewhat curious coincidence, that in the year when Professor Wheatstone and Mr. Cooke took out their first patent 'for improvements in giving signals and sounding alarms in distant places by

means of electric currents transmitted through metallic circuit,' Professor Morse, the American electrician, applied to Congress for aid in the construction and carrying on of a small electric telegraph to convey messages a short distance, and made the application without success. In the following year he came to this country to obtain a patent for his invention; but he was refused. He had come too late. Our own countrymen were beforehand with him. Very soon after we find experiments made with the electric telegraph between Euston Square and Camden Town. These experiments were made under the authority of the London and North-Western Railway Company, immediately on the taking out of the patent by Messrs. Wheatstone and Cooke. Mr. Robert Stephenson was one of those who came to watch the operation of this new and wonderful attempt to make the currents of the air man's faithful Ariel. The London and Birmingham Railway was opened through its whole length in 1838. The Liverpool and Preston line was opened in the same year. The Liverpool and Birmingham had been opened in the year before; the London and Croydon was opened the year after. The Act for the transmission of the mails by railways was passed in 1838. In the same year it was noted as an unparalleled, and to many an almost incredible, triumph of human energy and science over time and space, that a locomotive had been able to travel at a speed of thirty-seven miles an hour.

'The prospect of travelling from the metropolis to Liverpool, a distance of 210 miles, in ten hours,

calls forcibly to mind the tales of fairies and genii by which we were amused in our youth, and contrasts forcibly with the fact, attested on the personal experience of the writer of this notice, that about the commencement of the present century this same journey occupied a space of sixty hours.' These are the words of a writer who gives an interesting account of the railways of England during the first year of the reign of Queen Victoria. In the same volume from which this extract is taken an allusion is made to the possibility of steam communication being successfully established between England and the United States. 'Preparations on a gigantic scale,' a writer is able to announce, 'are now in a state of great forwardness for trying an experiment in steam navigation which has been the subject of much controversy among scientific men. Ships of an enormous size, furnished with steam power equal to the force of 400 horses and upwards, will, before our next volume shall be prepared, have probably decided the question whether this description of vessels can, in the present state of our knowledge, profitably engage in Transatlantic voyages. It is possible that these attempts may fail, a result which is indeed predicted by high authorities on this subject. We are more sanguine in our hopes ; but should these be disappointed, we cannot, if we are to judge from our past progress, doubt that longer experience, and a further application of inventive genius will at no very distant day render practicable and profitable by this means the longest voyages in which the adventurous spirit of man will lead him to

embark.' The experiment thus alluded to was made with perfect success. The *Sirius*, the *Great Western*, and the *Royal William* accomplished voyages between New York and this country in the early part of 1838; and it was remarked, that 'Transatlantic voyages by means of steam may now be said to be as easy of accomplishment, with ships of adequate size and power, as the passage between London and Margate.' The *Great Western* crossed the ocean from Bristol to New York in fifteen days. She was followed by the *Sirius*, which left Cork for New York, and made the passage in seventeen days. The controversy as to the possibility of such voyages, which was settled by the *Great Western* and the *Sirius*, had no reference to the actual safety of such an experiment. During seven years the mails for the Mediterranean had been despatched by means of steamers. The doubt was as to the possibility of stowing in a vessel so large a quantity of coal or other fuel as would enable her to accomplish her voyage across the Atlantic, where there could be no stopping place and no possibility of taking in new stores. It was found, to the delight of all those who believed in the practicability of the enterprise, that the quantity of fuel which each vessel had on board when she left her port of departure proved amply sufficient for the completion of the voyage. Neither the *Sirius* nor the *Great Western* was the first vessel to cross the Atlantic by means of steam propulsion. Nearly twenty years before, a vessel called the *Savannah*, built at New York, crossed the ocean to Liverpool, and some years later an English-built

steamer made several voyages between Holland and the Dutch West Indian colonies as a packet vessel in the service of that Government. Indeed, a voyage had been made round the Cape of Good Hope more lately still by a steam ship. These expeditions, however, had really little or nothing to do with the problem which was solved by the voyages of the *Sirius* and the *Great Western*. In the former instances the steam power was employed merely as an auxiliary. The vessel made as much use of her steam propulsion as she could, but she had to rely a good deal on her capacity as a sailer. This was quite a different thing from the enterprise of the *Sirius* and the *Great Western*, which was to cross the ocean by steam propulsion and steam propulsion only. It is evident that so long as the steam power was to be used only as an auxiliary, it would be impossible to reckon on speed and certainty of arrival. The doubt was whether a steamer could carry, with her cargo and passengers, fuel enough to serve for the whole of her voyage across the Atlantic. The expeditions of the *Sirius* and the *Great Western* settled the whole question. It was never again a matter of controversy. It is enough to say that two years after the *Great Western* went out from Bristol to New York the Cunard line of steamers was established. The steam communication between Liverpool and New York became thenceforth as regular and as unvarying a part of the business of commerce as the journeys of the trains on the Great Western Railway between London and Bristol. It was not Bristol which benefited most by the Transatlantic

voyages. They made the greatness of Liverpool. Year by year the sceptre of the commercial marine passed away from Bristol to Liverpool. No port in the world can show a line of docks like those of Liverpool. There the stately Mersey flows for miles between the superb and massive granite walls of the enclosures within whose shelter the ships of the world are arrayed as if on parade for the admiration of the traveller who has hitherto been accustomed to the irregular and straggling arrangements of the docks of London or of New York.

On July 5, 1839, an unusually late period of the year, the Chancellor of the Exchequer brought forward his annual budget. The most important part of the financial statement, so far as later times are concerned, is set out in a resolution proposed by the finance minister, which perhaps represents the greatest social improvement brought about by legislation in modern times. The Chancellor proposed a resolution declaring that 'it is expedient to reduce the postage on letters to one uniform rate of one penny charged upon every letter of a weight to be hereafter fixed by law; parliamentary privileges of franking being abolished and official franking strictly regulated; this House pledging itself at the same time to make good any deficiency of revenue which may be occasioned by such an alteration in the rates of the existing duties.' Up to this time the rates of postage had been both high and various. They were varying both as to distance, and as to the weight and even the size or the shape of a letter. The district or London post



was a separate branch of the postal department; and the charge for the transmission of letters was made on a different scale in London from that which prevailed between town and town. The average postage on every chargeable letter throughout the United Kingdom was six pence farthing. A letter from London to Brighton cost eight pence; to Aberdeen one shilling and three pence halfpenny; to Belfast one shilling and four pence. Nor was this all; for if the letter were written on more than one sheet of paper, it came under the operation of a higher scale of charge. Members of Parliament had the privilege of franking letters to a certain limited extent; members of the Government had the privilege of franking to an unlimited extent. It is perhaps as well to mention, for the sake of being intelligible to all readers in an age which has not, in this country at least, known practically the beauty and liberality of the franking privilege, that it consisted in the right of the privileged person to send his own or any other person's letters through the post free of charge by merely writing his name on the outside. This meant, in plain words, that the letters of the class who could best afford to pay for them went free of charge, and that those who could least afford to pay had to pay double—the expense, that is to say, of carrying their own letters and the letters of the privileged and exempt.

The greatest grievances were felt everywhere because of this absurd system. It had along with its other disadvantages that of encouraging what

may be called the smuggling of letters. Everywhere sprang up organisations for the illicit conveyance of correspondence at lower rates than those imposed by the Government. The proprietors of almost every kind of public conveyance are said to have been engaged in this unlawful but certainly not very unnatural or unjustifiable traffic. Five-sixths of all the letters sent between Manchester and London were said to have been conveyed for years by this process. One great mercantile house was proved to have been in the habit of sending sixty-seven letters by what we may call this underground post-office for every one on which they paid the government charges. It was not merely to escape heavy cost that these stratagems were employed. As there was an additional charge when a letter was written on more sheets than one, there was a frequent and almost a constant tampering by officials with the sanctity of sealed letters for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not they ought to be taxed on the higher scale. It was proved that in the years between 1815 and 1835, while the population had increased thirty per cent., and the stage coach duty had increased one hundred and twenty-eight per cent., the post-office revenues had shown no increase at all. In other countries the postal revenue had been on the increase steadily during that time; in the United States the revenue had actually trebled, although then and later the postal system of America was full of faults which at that day only seemed intelligible or excusable when placed in comparison with those of our own system.

Mr. (afterwards Sir Rowland) Hill is the man to whom this country, and indeed all civilisation, owes the adoption of the cheap and uniform system. His plan has been adopted by every State which professes to have a postal system at all. Mr. Hill belonged to a remarkable family. His father, Thomas Wright Hill, was a teacher, a man of advanced and practical views in popular education, a devoted lover of science, an advocate of civil and religious liberty, and a sort of celebrity in the Birmingham of his day, where he took a bold and active part in trying to defend the house of Dr. Priestley against the mob who attacked it. He had five sons, every one of whom made himself more or less conspicuous as a practical reformer in one path or another. The eldest of the sons was Matthew Davenport Hill, the philanthropic recorder of Birmingham, who did so much for prison reform and for the reclamation of juvenile offenders. The third son was Rowland Hill, the author of the cheap postal system. Rowland Hill when a little weakly child began to show some such precocious love for arithmetical calculations as Pascal showed for mathematics. His favourite amusement as a child was to lie on the hearthrug and count up figures by the hour together. As he grew up he became teacher of mathematics in his father's school. Afterwards he was appointed secretary to the South Australian Commission, and rendered much valuable service in the organisation of the colony of South Australia. His early love of masses of figures it may have been which in the first instance turned his attention to the number

of letters passing through the Post Office, the proportion they bore to the number of the population, the cost of carrying them, and the amount which the Post Office authorities charged for the conveyance of a single letter. A picturesque and touching little illustration of the veritable hardships of the existing system seems to have quickened his interest in a reform of it. Miss Martineau thus tells the story :—

‘Coleridge, when a young man, was walking through the Lake district, when he one day saw the postman deliver a letter to a woman at a cottage door. The woman turned it over and examined it, and then returned it, saying she could not pay the postage, which was a shilling. Hearing that the letter was from her brother, Coleridge paid the postage, in spite of the manifest unwillingness of the woman. As soon as the postman was out of sight she showed Coleridge how his money had been wasted, as far as she was concerned. The sheet was blank. There was an agreement between her brother and herself that as long as all went well with him he should send a blank sheet in this way once a quarter ; and she thus had tidings of him without expense of postage. Most persons would have remembered this incident as a curious story to tell ; but there was one mind which wakened up at once to a sense of the significance of the fact. It struck Mr. Rowland Hill that there must be something wrong in a system which drove a brother and sister to cheating, in order to gratify their desire to hear of one another’s welfare.’

Mr. Hill gradually worked out for himself a comprehensive scheme of reform. He put it before the world early in 1837. The public were taken by surprise when the plan came before them in the shape of a pamphlet which its author modestly entitled 'Post Office Reform ; its importance and practicability.' The root of Mr. Hill's system lay in the fact, made evident by him beyond dispute, that the actual cost of the conveyance of letters through the post was very trifling, and was but little increased by the distance over which they had to be carried.

His proposal was therefore that the rates of postage should be diminished to the minimum ; that at the same time the speed of conveyance should be increased, and that there should be much greater frequency of despatch. His principle was, in fact, the very opposite of that which had prevailed in the calculations of the authorities. Their idea was that the higher the charge for letters the greater the return to the revenue. He started on the assumption that the smaller the charge the greater the profit. He therefore recommended the substitution of one uniform charge of one penny the half-ounce, without reference to the distance within the limits of the United Kingdom which the letter had to be carried. The Post Office authorities were at first uncompromising in their opposition to the scheme. The Postmaster-General, Lord Lichfield, said in the House of Lords, that of all the wild and extravagant schemes he had ever heard of, it was the wildest and most extravagant. 'The mails,' he said, 'will have to carry

twelve times as much weight, and therefore the charge for transmission, instead of 100,000*l.*, as now, must be twelve times that amount. The walls of the Post Office would burst, the whole area in which the building stands would not be large enough to receive the clerks and the letters.' It is impossible not to be struck by the paradoxical peculiarity of this argument. Because the change would be so much welcomed by the public, Lord Lichfield argued that it ought not to be made. He did not fall back upon the then familiar assertion that the public would not send anything like the number of letters the advocates of the scheme expected. He argued that they would send so many as to make it troublesome for the Post Office authorities to deal with them. In plain words, it would be such an immense accommodation to the population in general, that the officials could not undertake the trouble of carrying it into effect. Another Post Office official, Colonel Maberley, was at all events more liberal. 'My constant language,' he said afterwards, 'to the heads of the departments was—This plan we know will fail. It is your duty to take care that no obstruction is placed in the way of it by the heads of the department, and by the Post Office. The allegation, I have not the least doubt, will be made at a subsequent period that this plan has failed in consequence of the unwillingness of the Government to carry it into fair execution. It is our duty as servants of the Government to take care that no blame eventually shall fall on the Government through any unwillingness of ours to

carry it into proper effect.' It is, perhaps, less surprising that the routine mind of officials should have seen no future but failure for the scheme, when so vigorous and untrammelled a thinker as Sydney Smith spoke with anger and contempt of the fact that 'a million of revenue is given up in the nonsensical Penny Post scheme, to please my old, excellent and universally dissentient friend, Noah Warburton.' Mr. Warburton was then member for Bridport, and with Mr. Wallace, another member of Parliament, was very active in supporting and promoting the views of Mr. Hill. 'I admire the Whig Ministry,' Sydney Smith went on to say, 'and think they have done more good things than all the ministries since the Revolution; but these concessions are sad and unworthy marks of weakness, and fill reasonable men with alarm.'

It will be seen from this remark alone that the Ministry had yielded somewhat more readily than might have been expected to the arguments of Mr. Hill. At the time his pamphlet appeared a commission was actually engaged in inquiring into the condition of the Post Office department. Their attention was drawn to Mr. Hill's plan, and they gave it a careful consideration, and reported in its favour, although the Post Office authorities were convinced that it must involve an unbearable loss of revenue. In Parliament Mr. Wallace, whose name has been already mentioned, moved for a committee to inquire into the whole subject, and especially to examine the mode recommended for charging and collecting postage in

the pamphlet of Mr. Hill. The committee gave the subject a very patient consideration, and at length made a report recommending uniform charges and prepayment by stamps. That part of Mr. Hill's plan which suggested the use of postage stamps was adopted by him on the advice of Mr. Charles Knight. The Government took up the scheme with some spirit and liberality. The revenue that year showed a deficiency, but they determined to run the further risk which the proposal involved. The commercial community had naturally been stirred greatly by the project which promised so much relief and advantage. Sydney Smith was very much mistaken indeed when he fancied that it was only to please his old and excellent friend, Mr. Warburton, that the Ministry gave way to the innovation. Petitions from all the commercial communities were pouring in to support the plan, and to ask that at least it should have a fair trial. The Government at length determined to bring in a bill which should provide for the almost immediate introduction of Mr. Hill's scheme, and for the abolition of the franking system except in the case of official letters actually sent on business directly belonging to her Majesty's service. The bill declared, as an introductory step, that the charge for postage should be at the rate of four pence for each letter under half an ounce in weight, irrespective of distance, within the limits of the United Kingdom. This, however, was to be only a beginning; for on January 10, 1840, the postage was fixed at the uniform rate of one penny per letter of not more than



half an ounce in weight. The introductory measure was not, of course, carried without opposition in both Houses of Parliament. The Duke of Wellington in his characteristic way declared that he strongly objected to the scheme, but as the Government had evidently set their hearts upon it, he recommended the House of Lords not to offer any opposition to it. In the House of Commons it was opposed by Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Goulburn, both of whom strongly condemned the whole scheme as likely to involve the country in vast loss of revenue. The measure, however, passed into law. Some idea of the effect it has produced upon the postal correspondence of the country may be gathered from the fact that in 1839, the last year of the heavy postage, the number of letters delivered in Great Britain and Ireland was a little more than eighty-two millions, which included some five millions and a half of franked letters returning nothing to the revenues of the country; whereas, in 1875, more than a thousand millions of letters were delivered in the United Kingdom. The population during the same time has not nearly doubled itself. It has already been remarked that the principle of Sir Rowland Hill's reform has since been put into operation in every civilised country in the world. It may be added that before long we shall in all human probability see an inter-oceanic postage established at a rate as low as people sometimes thought Sir Rowland Hill a madman for recommending as applicable to our inland post. The time is not far distant when a letter will be carried

from London to San Francisco, or to Tokio in Japan, at a rate of charge as small as that which made financiers stare and laugh when it was suggested as profitable remuneration for carrying a letter from London to the towns of Sussex or Hertfordshire. The 'Penny Post,' let it be said, is an older institution than that which Sir Rowland Hill introduced. A penny post for the conveyance of letters had been set up in London so long ago as 1683 ; and it was adopted or annexed by the Government some years after. An effort was even made to set up a halfpenny post in London, in opposition to the official penny post, in 1708 ; but the Government soon crushed this vexatious and intrusive rival. In 1738 Dr. Johnson writes to Mr. Cave 'to entreat that you will be pleased to inform me, by the penny post, whether you resolve to print the poem.' After a while the Government changed their penny post to a twopenny post, and gradually made a distinction between district and other postal systems, and contrived to swell the price for deliveries of all kinds. Long before even this time of the penny post, the old records of the city of Bristol contain an account of the payment of one penny for the carriage of letters to London. It need hardly be explained, however, that a penny in that time, or even in 1683, was a payment of very different value indeed from the modest sum which Sir Rowland Hill was successful in establishing. The ancient penny post resembled the modern penny post only in name.

## CHAPTER V.

## CHARTISM.

It cannot, however, be said that all the omens under which the new Queen's reign opened at home were as auspicious as the coincidences which made it contemporary with the first chapters of these new and noble developments in the history of science and invention. On the contrary, it began amid many grim and unpromising conditions in our social affairs. The winter of 1837-8 was one of unusual severity and distress. There would have been much discontent and grumbling in any case among the class described by French writers as the *prolétaire* ; but the complaints were aggravated by a common belief that the young Queen was wholly under the influence of a frivolous and selfish minister, who occupied her with amusements while the poor were starving. It does not appear that there was at any time the slightest justification for such a belief ; but it prevailed among the working classes and the poor very generally, and added to the sufferings of genuine want the bitterness of imaginary wrong. Popular education was little looked after ; so far as the State was concerned, might be said not to be looked after at all. The laws of political eco-

nomy were as yet only within the appreciation of a few, who were regarded not uncommonly, because of their theories, somewhat as phrenologists or mesmerists might be looked on in a more enlightened time. Some writers have made a great deal of the case of Thom and his disciples as evidence of the extraordinary ignorance that prevailed. Thom was a broken-down brewer, and in fact a madman, who had for some time been going about in Canterbury and other parts of Kent bedizened in fantastic costume, and styling himself at first Sir William Courtenay, of Powderham Castle, Knight of Malta, King of Jerusalem, king of the gipsy races, and we know not what else. He announced himself as a great political reformer, and for awhile he succeeded in getting many to believe in and support him. He was afterwards confined for some time in a lunatic asylum, and when he came out he presented himself to the ignorant peasantry in the character of a second Messiah. He found many followers and believers again, among a humbler class indeed than those whom he had formerly won over. Much of his influence over the poor Kentish labourers was due to his denunciations of the new Poor Law, which was then popularly hated and feared with an almost insane intensity of feeling. Thom told them he had come to regenerate the whole world, and also to save his followers from the new Poor Law ; and the latter announcement commended the former. He assembled a crowd of his supporters, and undertook to lead them to an attack on Canterbury. With his own hand he shot dead a policeman

who endeavoured to oppose his movements, exactly as a saviour of society of bolder pretensions and greater success did at Boulogne not long after. Two companies of soldiers came out from Canterbury to disperse the rioters. The officer in command was shot dead by Thom. Thom's followers then charged the unexpected soldiers so fiercely that for a moment there was some confusion ; but the second company fired a volley which stretched Thom and several of his adherents lifeless on the field. That was an end of the rising. Several of Thom's followers were afterwards tried for murder, convicted and sentenced ; but some pity was felt for their ignorance and their delusion, and they were not consigned to death. Long after the fall of their preposterous hero and saint, many of Thom's disciples believed that he would return from the grave to carry out the promised work of his mission. All this was lamentable, but could hardly be regarded as specially characteristic of the early years of the present reign. The Thom delusion was not much more absurd than the Tichborne mania of a later day. Down to our own time there are men and women among the Social Democrats of cultured Germany who still cherish the hope that their idol Ferdinand Lassalle will come back from the dead to lead and guide them.

But there were political and social dangers in the opening of the present reign more serious than any that could have been conjured up by a crazy man in a fantastic dress. There were delusions having deeper roots and showing a more inviting shelter than any

that a religious fanatic of the vulgar type could cause to spring up in our society.

✓ Only a few weeks after the coronation of the Queen a great Radical meeting was held in Birmingham. A manifesto was adopted there which afterwards came to be known as the Chartist petition. With that moment Chartism began to be one of the most disturbing influences of the political life of the country. It is a movement which, although its influence may now be said to have wholly passed away, well deserves to have its history fully written. For ten years it agitated England. It sometimes seemed to threaten an actual uprising of all the *prolétaire* against what were then the political and social institutions of the country. It might have been a very serious danger if the State had been involved in any external difficulties. It was backed by much genuine enthusiasm, passion and intelligence. It appealed strongly and naturally to whatever there was of discontent among the working classes. It afforded a most acceptable and convenient means by which ambitious politicians of the self-seeking order could raise themselves into temporary importance. Its fierce and fitful flame went out at last under the influence of the clear, strong and steady light of political reform and education. The one great lesson it teaches is, that political agitation lives and is formidable only by virtue of what is reasonable in its demands. Thousands of ignorant and miserable men all over the country joined the Chartist agitation who cared nothing about the substantial value of its political

claims. They were poor, they were overworked, they were badly paid, their lives were altogether wretched. They got into their heads some wild idea that the People's Charter would give them better food and wages and lighter work if it were obtained, and that for that very reason the aristocrats and the officials would not grant it. No political concessions could really have satisfied these men. If the Charter had been granted in 1838, they would no doubt have been as dissatisfied as ever in 1839. But the discontent of these poor creatures would have brought with it little danger to the State if it had not become part of the support of an organisation which could show some sound and good reason for the demands it made. The moment that the clear and practical political grievances were dealt with the organisation melted away. Vague discontent, however natural and excusable it may be, is only formidable in politics when it helps to swell the strength and the numbers of a crowd which calls for some reform that can be made and is withheld. One of the vulgarest fallacies of statecraft is to declare that it is of no use granting the reforms which would satisfy reasonable demands, because there are still unreasonable agitators whom these will not satisfy. Get the reasonable men on your side, and you need not fear the unreasonable. This is the lesson taught to statesmen by the Chartist agitation.

A funeral oration over Chartism was pronounced by Sir John Campbell, then Attorney-General, afterwards Lord Chief Justice Campbell, at a public dinner

at Edinburgh on October 24, 1839. He spoke at some length and with much complacency of Chartism as an agitation which had passed away. Some ten days afterwards occurred the most formidable outburst of Chartism that had been known up to that time, and Chartism continued to be an active and a disturbing influence in England for nearly ten years after. If Sir John Campbell had told his friends and constituents at the Edinburgh dinner that the influence of Chartism was just about to make itself really felt, he would have shown himself a somewhat more acute politician than we now understand him to be. Seldom has a public man setting up to be a political authority made a worse hit than he did in that memorable declaration. Campbell was indeed only a clever shrewd lawyer of the hard and narrow class. He never made any pretension to statesmanship, or even to great political knowledge; and his unfortunate blunder might be passed over without notice were it not that it illustrates fairly enough the manner in which men of better information and judgment than he were at that time in the habit of disposing of all inconvenient political problems. The Attorney-General was aware that there had been a few riots and a few arrests, and that the law had been what he would call vindicated; and as he had no manner of sympathy with the motives which could lead men to distress themselves and their friends about imaginary charters, he assumed that there was an end of the matter. It did not occur to him to ask himself whether there might not be some underlying causes



to explain if not to excuse the agitation that just then began to disturb the country, and that continued to disturb it for so many years. Even if he had inquired into the subject, it is not likely that he would have come to any wiser conclusion about it. The dramatic instinct, if we may be allowed to call it so, which enables a man to put himself for the moment into the condition and mood of men entirely unlike himself in feelings and conditions, is an indispensable element of real statesmanship ; but it is the rarest of all gifts among politicians of the second order. If Sir John Campbell had turned his attention to the Chartist question, he would only have found that a number of men, for the most part poor and ignorant, were complaining of grievances where he could not for himself see any substantial grievances at all. That would have been enough for him. If a solid, wealthy and rising lawyer could not see any cause for grumbling, he would have made up his mind that no reasonable persons worthy the consideration of sensible legislators would continue to grumble after they had been told by those in authority that it was their business to keep quiet. But if he had, on the other hand, looked with the light of sympathetic intelligence, of that dramatic instinct which has just been mentioned, at the condition of the classes among whom Chartism was then rife, he would have seen that it was not likely the agitation could be put down by a few prosecutions and a few arrests, and the censure of a prosperous Attorney-General. He would have seen that Chartism was not a cause

but a consequence. The intelligence of a very ordinary man who approached the question in an impartial mood might have seen that Chartism was the expression of a vague discontent with very positive grievances and evils.

We have in our time outlived the days of political abstractions. The catch-words which thrilled our forefathers with emotion on one side or the other fall with hardly any meaning on our ears. We smile at such phrases as 'the rights of man.' We hardly know what is meant by talking of 'the people' as the words were used long ago when 'the people' was understood to mean a vast mass of wronged persons who had no representation and were oppressed by privilege and the aristocracy. We seldom talk of 'liberty;' anyone venturing to found a theory or even a declamation on some supposed deprivation of liberty would soon find himself in the awkward position of being called on to give a scientific definition of what he understood liberty to be. He would be as much puzzled as were certain English working men, who desiring to express to Mr. John Stuart Mill their sympathy with what they called in the slang of continental democracy 'the Revolution,' were calmly bidden by the great Liberal thinker to ask themselves what they meant by 'the Revolution,' which revolution, what revolution, and why they sympathised with it. But perhaps we are all a little too apt to think that because these abstractions have no living meaning now, they never had any living meaning at all. They convey no manner of clear idea in Eng-

land now, but it does not by any means follow that they never conveyed any such idea. The phrase which Mr. Mill so properly condemned when he found it in the mouths of English working men had a very intelligible and distinct meaning when it first came to be used in France and throughout the Continent. 'The Revolution' expressed a clear reality, as recognisable by the intelligence of all who heard it as the name of Free Trade or of Ultramontaniam to men of our time. 'The Revolution' was the principle which was asserting all over Europe the overthrow of the old absolute power of kings, and it described it just as well as any word could do. It is meaningless in our day for the very reason that it was full of meaning then. So it was with 'the people' and 'the rights of the people' and the 'rights of labour,' and all the other grandiloquent phrases which seem to us so empty and so meaningless now. They are empty and meaningless at the present hour; but they have no application now chiefly because they had application then.

The Reform Bill of 1832 had been necessarily and perhaps naturally a class measure. It had done great things for the constitutional system of England. It had averted a revolution which without some such concession would probably have been inevitable. It had settled for ever the question which was so fiercely and so gravely debated during the discussions of the reform years, whether the English Constitution is or is not based upon a system of popular representation. To many at present it may seem hardly credible that

sane men could have denied the existence of the representative principle. But during the debates on the great Reform Bill such a denial was the strong point of many of the leading opponents of the measure, including the Duke of Wellington himself. The principle of the Constitution, it was soberly argued, is that the Sovereign invites whatever communities or interests he thinks fit to send in persons to Parliament to take council with him on the affairs of the nation. This idea was got rid of by the Reform Bill. That bill abolished fifty-six nomination or rotten boroughs, and took away half the representation from thirty others ; it disposed of the seats thus obtained by giving sixty-five additional representatives to the counties, and conferring the right of returning members on Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham, and some thirty-nine large and prosperous towns which had previously had no representation ; while, as Lord John Russell said in his speech when he introduced the bill in March 1831, 'a ruined mound' sent two representatives to Parliament ; 'three niches in a stone wall' sent two representatives to Parliament ; 'a park where no houses were to be seen' sent two representatives to Parliament. The bill introduced a 10*l.* household qualification for boroughs, and extended the county franchise to leaseholders and copyholders. But it left the working classes almost altogether out of the franchise. Not merely did it confer no political emancipation on them, but it took away in many places the peculiar franchises which made the working men voters. There were communities—such, for

example, as that of Preston, in Lancashire—where the system of franchise existing created something like universal suffrage. All this was smoothed away, if such an expression may be used, by the Reform Bill. In truth the Reform Bill broke down the monopoly which the aristocracy and landed classes had enjoyed, and admitted the middle classes to a share of the law-making power. The representation was divided between the aristocracy and the middle class, instead of being, as before, the exclusive possession of the former.

The working class, in the opinion of many of their ablest and most influential representatives, were not merely left out but shouldered out. This was all the more exasperating because the excitement and agitation by the strength of which the Reform Bill was carried in the teeth of so much resistance were kept up by the working men. There was besides, at the time of the Reform Bill, a very high degree of what may be called the temperature of the French Revolution still heating the senses and influencing the judgment even of the aristocratic leaders of the movement. What Richter calls the 'seed-grains' of the revolutionary doctrines had been blown abroad so widely that they rested in some of the highest as well as in most of the lowliest places. Some of the Reform leaders, Lord Durham for instance, were prepared to go much farther in the way of Radicalism than at a later period Mr. Cobden or Mr. Bright would have gone. There was more than once a sort of appeal to the working men of the country which,

however differently it may have been meant, certainly sounded in their ears as if it were an intimation that in the event of the bill being resisted too long it might be necessary to try what the strength of a popular uprising could do. Many years after, in the defence of the Irish state prisoners at Clonmel, the counsel who pleaded their cause insisted that they had warrant for their conduct in certain proceedings which were in preparation during the Reform agitation. He talked with undisguised significance of the teacher being in the Ministry and the pupils in the dock ; and quoted Captain Macheath to the effect that if laws were made equally for every degree, there might even then be rare company on Tyburn tree. It is not necessary to attach too much importance to assertions of this kind, or to accept them as sober contributions to history. But they are very instructive as a means of enabling us to understand the feeling of soreness which remained in the minds of large masses of the population when after the passing of the Reform Bill they found themselves left out in the cold. Rightly or wrongly they believed that their strength had been kept in reserve or *in terrorem* to secure the carrying of the Reform Bill, and that when it was carried they were immediately thrown over by those whom they had thus helped to pass it. Therefore at the time when the young Sovereign ascended the throne, the working classes in all the large towns were in a state of profound disappointment and discontent, almost indeed of disaffection. Chartism was beginning to succeed to the Reform agitation.

The leaders who had come from the ranks of the aristocracy had been discarded or had withdrawn. In some cases they had withdrawn in perfect good faith, believing sincerely that they had done the work which they undertook to do, and that that was all the country required. Men drawn more immediately from the working class itself, or who had in some way been dropped down by a class higher in the social scale, took up the popular leadership now.

Chartism may be said to have sprung definitively into existence in consequence of the formal declarations of the leaders of the Liberal party in Parliament that they did not intend to push Reform any farther. At the opening of the first Parliament of Queen Victoria's reign the question was brought to a test. A Radical member of the House of Commons moved as an amendment to the address a resolution declaring in favour of the ballot and of shorter duration of Parliaments. Only twenty members voted for it ; and Lord John Russell declared distinctly against all such attempts to reopen the Reform question. It was impossible that this declaration should not be received with disappointment and anger by great masses of the people. They had been in the full assurance that the Reform Bill itself was only the means by which greater changes were to be brought about. Lord John Russell said in the House of Commons that to push Reform any farther then would be a breach of faith towards those who helped him to carry it. A great many outside Parliament not unnaturally regarded the refusal to go any farther

as a breach of faith towards them on the part of the Liberal leaders. Lord John Russell was right from his point of view. It would have been impossible to carry the Reform movement any farther just then. In a country like ours where interests are so nicely balanced, it must always happen that a forward movement in politics is followed by a certain reaction. The parliamentary leaders in Parliament were already beginning to feel the influence of this law of our political growth. It would have been hopeless to attempt to get the upper and middle classes at such a time to consent to any further changes of considerable importance. But the feeling of those who had helped so materially to bring about the Reform movement was at least intelligible when they found that its effects were to stop just short of the measures which alone could have any direct influence on their political position.

✓ A conference was held almost immediately between a few of the Liberal members of Parliament who professed Radical opinions and some of the leaders of the working men. At this conference the programme, or what was always afterwards known as 'the Charter,' was agreed upon and drawn up. The name of 'Charter' appears to have been given to it for the first time by O'Connell. 'There's your Charter,' he said to the secretary of the Working Men's Association; 'agitate for it, and never be content with anything less.' It is a great thing accomplished in political agitation to have found a telling name. A name is almost as important for a new agitation as



for a new novel. The title of 'The People's Charter' would of itself have launched the movement.

✓ Quietly studied now, the People's Charter does not seem a very formidable document. There is little smell of gunpowder about it. Its 'points,' as they were called, were six. Manhood Suffrage came first. It was then called universal suffrage, but it only meant manhood suffrage, for the promoters of the movement had not the slightest idea of insisting on the franchise for women. The second was Annual Parliaments. Vote by Ballot was the third. Abolition of the Property Qualification (then and for many years after required for the election of a member to Parliament) was the fourth. The Payment of Members was the fifth; and the Division of the Country into Equal Electoral Districts, the sixth of the famous points. Of these proposals some, it will be seen, were perfectly reasonable. Not one was so absolutely unreasonable as to be outside the range of fair and quiet discussion among practical politicians. Three of the points—half, that is to say, of the whole number—have already been made part of our constitutional system. The existing franchise may be virtually regarded as manhood suffrage. We have for years been voting by means of a written paper dropped in a ballot-box. The property qualification for members of Parliament could hardly be said to have been abolished. Such a word seems far too grand and dignified to describe the fate that befell it. We should rather say that it was extinguished by its own absurdity and viciousness. It never kept out of

Parliament any person legally disqualified, and it was the occasion of incessant tricks and devices which would surely have been counted disreputable and disgraceful to those who engaged in them, but that the injustice and folly of the system generated a sort of false public conscience where it was concerned, and made people think it as lawful to cheat it, as at one time the most respectable persons in private life thought it allowable to cheat the revenue and wear smuggled lace or drink smuggled brandy. The proposal to divide the country into equal electoral districts is one which can hardly yet be regarded as having come to any test. But it is almost certain that sooner or later some alteration of our present system in that direction will be adopted. Of the two other points of the Charter, the payment of members may be regarded as decidedly objectionable; and that for yearly parliaments as embodying a proposition which would make public life an almost insufferable nuisance to those actively concerned in it. But neither of these two proposals would be looked upon in our time as outside the range of legitimate political discussion. Indeed, the difficulty anyone engaged in their advocacy would find just now would be in getting any considerable body of listeners to take the slightest interest in the argument either for or against them.

The Chartists might be roughly divided into three classes—the political Chartists, the social Chartists, and the Chartists of vague discontent who joined the movement because they were wretched and felt angry.

The first were the regular political agitators who wanted a wider popular representation ; the second were chiefly led to the movement by their hatred of the 'bread-tax.' These two classes were perfectly clear as to what they wanted : some of their demands were just and reasonable ; none of them were without the sphere of rational and peaceful controversy. The disciples of mere discontent naturally swerved alternately to the side of those leaders or sections who talked loudest and fiercest against the law-makers and the constituted authorities. Chartism soon split itself into two general divisions—the moral force and the physical force Chartistism. Nothing can be more unjust than to represent the leaders and promoters of the movement as mere factious and self-seeking demagogues. Some of them were men of great ability and eloquence ; some were impassioned young poets drawn from the class whom Kingsley has described in his 'Alton Locke ;' some were men of education ; many were earnest and devoted fanatics ; and, so far as we can judge, all, or nearly all, were sincere. Even the man who did the movement most harm, and who made himself most odious to all reasonable outsiders, the once famous, now forgotten, Feargus O'Connor, appears to have been sincere and to have personally lost more than he gained by his Chartistism. Four or five years after the collapse of what may be called the active Chartist agitation, a huge white-headed vacuous-eyed man was to be seen of mornings wandering through the arcades of Covent Garden Market, looking at the fruits and flowers, occasionally taking

up a flower, smelling at it, and putting it down with a smile of infantile satisfaction ; a man who might have reminded observers of Mr. Dick in Dickens's ' David Copperfield ; ' and this was the once renowned, once dreaded and detested Feargus O'Connor. For some time before his death his reason had wholly deserted him. Men did not know at first in the House of Commons the meaning of the odd pranks which Feargus was beginning to play there to the bewilderment of the great assembly. At last it was seen that the fallen leader of Chartism was a hopeless madman. It is hardly to be doubted that insanity had long been growing on him, and that some at least of his political follies and extravagances were the result of an increasing disorder of the brain. In his day he had been the very model for a certain class of demagogue. He was of commanding presence, great stature, and almost gigantic strength. He had education ; he had mixed in good society ; he belonged to an old family, and indeed boasted his descent from a line of Irish kings, not without some ground for the claim. He had been a man of some fashion at one time and had led a life of wild dissipation in his early years. He had a kind of eloquence which told with immense power on a mass of half-ignorant hearers ; and indeed men who had no manner of liking for him or sympathy with his doctrines have declared that he was the most effective mob orator they had ever heard. He was ready, if needs were, to fight his way single-handed through a whole mass of Tory opponents at a contested election. Thomas Cooper, the venerable

poet of Chartism, has given an amusing description, in his Autobiography, of Feargus O'Connor, who was then his hero, leaping from a waggon at a Nottingham election into the midst of a crowd of Tory butchers, and with only two stout Chartist followers fighting his way through all opposition, 'flooring the butchers like ninepins.' 'Once,' says Mr. Cooper, 'the Tory lambs fought off all who surrounded him and got him down, and my heart quaked,—for I thought they would kill him. But in a very few moments his red head emerged again from the rough human billows, and he was fighting his way as before.'

There were many men in the movement of a nobler moral nature than poor huge wild Feargus O'Connor. There were men like Thomas Cooper himself, devoted, impassioned, full of poetic aspiration and no scant measure of poetic inspiration as well. Henry Vincent was a man of unimpeachable character and of some ability, an effective popular speaker, who has since maintained in a very unpretending way a considerable reputation. Ernest Jones was as sincere and self-sacrificing a man as ever joined a sinking cause. He had proved his sincerity more in deed than word. His talents only fell short of that height which might claim to be regarded as genius. His education was that of a scholar and a gentleman. Many men of education and ability were drawn into sympathy if not into actual co-operation with the Chartists by a conviction that some of their claims were well-founded, and that the grievances of the working classes, which were ter-

rible to contemplate, were such as a Parliament better representing all classes would be able to remedy. Some of these men have since made for themselves an honourable name in Parliament and out of it ; some of them have risen to high political position. It is necessary to read such a book as Thomas Cooper's Autobiography to understand how genuine was the poetic and political enthusiasm which was at the heart of the Chartist movement, and how bitter was the suffering which drove into its ranks so many thousands of stout working men who, in a country like England, might well have expected to be able to live by the hard work they were only too willing to do. One must read the Anti-Corn-Law Rhymes of Ebenezer Elliott to understand how the ' bread tax ' became identified in the minds of the very best of the working class, and identified justly, with the system of political and economical legislation which was undoubtedly kept up, although not of conscious purpose, for the benefit of a class. In the minds of too many, the British Constitution meant hard work and half-starvation.

A whole literature of Chartist newspapers sprang up to advocate the cause. The *Northern Star*, owned and conducted by Feargus O'Connor, was the most popular and influential of them ; but every great town had its Chartist press. Meetings were held at which sometimes very violent language was employed. It began to be the practice to hold torchlight meetings at night, and many men went armed to these, and open clamour was made by the wilder of the Chartists for an appeal to arms. A

formidable riot took place in Birmingham, where the authorities endeavoured to put down a Chartist meeting. Ebenezer Elliott and other sensible sympathisers, endeavoured to open the eyes of the more extreme Chartists to the folly of all schemes for measures of violence; but for the time the more violent a speaker was, the better chance he had of becoming popular. Efforts were made at times to bring about a compromise with the middle-class Liberals and the Anti-Corn-Law leaders; but all such attempts proved failures. The Chartists would not give up their Charter; many of them would not renounce the hope of seeing it carried by force. The Government began to prosecute some of the orators and leaders of the Charter movement; and some of these were convicted, imprisoned, and treated with great severity. Henry's Vincent's imprisonment at Newport, in Wales, was the occasion of an attempt at rescue which bore a very close resemblance indeed to a scheme of organised and armed rebellion.

Newport had around it a large mining population, and the miners were nearly all physical force Chartists. It was arranged among them to march in three divisions to a certain rendezvous, and when they had formed a junction there, which was to be two hours after midnight, to march into Newport, attack the gaol, and effect the release of Vincent and other prisoners. The attempt was to be under the chief command of Mr. Frost, a trader of Newport, who had been a magistrate, but was deprived of the commission of the peace for violent political speeches—a

man of respectable character and conduct up to that time. This was on November 4, 1839. There was some misunderstanding and delay, as almost invariably happens in such enterprises, and the divisions of the little army did not effect their junction in time. When they entered Newport, they found the authorities fully prepared to meet them. Frost entered the town at the head of one division only, another following him at some interval. The third was nowhere as far as the object of the enterprise was concerned. A conflict took place between the rioters and the soldiery and police, and the rioters were dispersed with a loss of some ten killed and fifty wounded. In their flight they encountered some of the other divisions coming up to the enterprise all too late. Nothing was more remarkable than the courage shown by the mayor of Newport, the magistrates, and the little body of soldiers. The mayor, Mr. Phillips, received two gunshot wounds. Frost was arrested next day along with some of his colleagues. They were tried on June 6, 1840. The charge against them was one of high treason. There did really appear ground enough to suppose that the expedition led by Frost was not merely to rescue Vincent, but to set going the great rebellious movement of which the physical force Chartists had long been talking. The Chartists appear at first to have numbered some ten thousand—twenty thousand indeed, according to other accounts—and they were armed with guns, pikes, swords, pickaxes and bludgeons. If the delay and misunderstanding had not



taken place, and they had arrived at their rendezvous at the appointed time, the attempt might have led to very calamitous results. The jury found Frost and two of his companions, Williams and Jones, guilty of high treason, and they were sentenced to death; the sentence, however, was commuted to one of transportation for life. Even this was afterwards relaxed, and when some years had passed away, and Chartism had ceased to be a disturbing influence, Frost was allowed to return to England, where he found that a new generation had grown up, and that he was all but forgotten. In the meantime the Corn-Law agitation had been successful; the year of revolutions had passed harmlessly over; Feargus O'Connor's day was done.

But the trial and conviction of Frost, Williams, and Jones did not put a stop to the Chartist agitation. On the contrary, that agitation seemed rather to wax and strengthen and grow broader because of the attempt at Newport, and its consequences. Thomas Cooper, for example, had never attended a Chartist meeting, nor known anything of Chartism beyond what he read in the newspapers, until after the conviction of Frost and his companions. There was no lack of what were called energetic measures on the part of the Government. The leading Chartists all over the country were prosecuted and tried, literally by hundreds. In most cases they were convicted and sentenced to terms of imprisonment. The imprisonment served rather to make the Chartist leaders popular, and to advertise the movement, than

to accomplish any purpose the Government had at heart. They helped to make the Government very unpopular. The working classes grew more and more bitter against the Whigs, who they said had professed Liberalism only to gain their own ends, and were really at heart less Liberal than the Tories. Now and then an imprisoned representative of the Chartist movement got to the end of his period of sentence, and came out of durance. He was a hero all over again, and his return to public life was the signal for fresh demonstrations of Chartism. At the general election of 1841, the vast majority of the Chartists, acting on the advice of some of their more extreme leaders, threw all their support into the cause of the Tories, and so helped the downfall of the Melbourne Administration.

Wide and almost universal discontent among the working classes in town and country still helped to swell the Chartist ranks. The weavers and stockingers in some of the manufacturing towns were miserably poor. Wages were low everywhere. In the agricultural districts the complaints against the operation of the new Poor Law were vehement and passionate; and although they were unjust in principle and sustained by monstrous exaggerations of statement, they were not the less potent as recruiting agents for Chartism. There was a profound distrust of the middle class and their leaders. The Anti-Corn-Law agitation which was then springing up, and which, one might have thought, must find its most strenuous support among the poor artisans of the

towns, was regarded with deep disgust by some of the Chartists, and with downright hostility by others. A very temperate orator of the Chartists put the feeling of himself and his fellows in clear terms. 'We do not object to the repeal of the Corn Laws,' he said; 'on the contrary. When we get the Charter we will repeal the Corn Laws and all the bad laws. But if you give up your agitation for the Charter to help the Free Traders, they will never help you to get the Charter. Don't be deceived by the middle classes again! You helped them to get the Reform Bill, and where are the fine promises they made you? Don't listen to their humbug any more. Stick to your Charter. Without your votes you are veritable slaves.' The Chartists believed themselves abandoned by their natural leaders. All manner of socialist doctrines began to creep in among them. Wild and infidel opinions were proclaimed by many. Thomas Cooper tells one little anecdote which he says fairly illustrates the feeling of many of the fiercer spirits among the artisan Chartists in some of the towns. He and his friends were holding a meeting one day in Leicester. A poor religious stockinger said: 'Let us be patient a little longer; surely God Almighty will help us soon.' 'Talk to us no more about thy Goddle Mighty,' was the fierce cry that came in reply from one of the audience; 'there isn't one! If there was one, he wouldn't let us suffer as we do!' About the same time a poor stockinger rushed into Cooper's house, and throwing himself wildly on a chair, exclaimed, 'I wish they

would hang me. I have lived on cold potatoes that were given me these two days, and this morning I've eaten a raw potato for sheer hunger. Give me a bit of bread and a cup of coffee or I shall drop.' Thomas Cooper's remark about this time is very intelligible and simple. It tells a long clear story about Chartistism. 'How fierce,' he says, 'my discourses became now in the Market Place on Sunday evenings! My heart often burned with indignation I knew not how to express. I began from sheer sympathy to feel a tendency to glide into the depraved thinking of some of the stronger but coarser spirits among the men.'

So the agitation went on. We need not follow it through all its incidents. It took in some places the form of industrial strikes; in others, of socialistic assemblages. Its fanaticism had in many instances a strong flavour of nobleness and virtue. Some men under the influence of thoughtful leaders pledged themselves to total abstinence from intoxicating drinks, in the full belief that the agitation would never succeed until the working classes had proved themselves by their self-control to be worthy of the gift of freedom. In other instances, as has been already remarked, the disappointment and despair of the people took the form of infidelity. There were many riots and disturbances; none, indeed, of so seemingly rebellious a nature as that of Frost and his companions, but many serious enough to spread great alarm and to furnish fresh occasion for Government prosecutions and imprisonments. Some of the prisoners seem to have been really treated with

a positively wanton harshness and even cruelty. Thomas Cooper's account of his own sufferings in prison is painful to read. It is not easy to understand what good purpose any Government could have supposed the prison authorities were serving by the unnecessary degradation and privation of men who, whatever their errors, were conspicuously and transparently sincere and honest.

It is clear that at that time the Chartists, who represented the bulk of the artisan class in most of the large towns, did in their very hearts believe that England was ruled for the benefit of aristocrats and millionaires who were absolutely indifferent to the sufferings of the poor. It is equally clear that most of what are called the ruling class did really believe the English working men who joined the Chartist movement to be a race of fierce unmanageable and selfish communists who, if they were allowed their own way for a moment, would prove themselves determined to overthrow throne, altar, and all established securities of society. An ignorant panic prevailed on both sides. England was indeed divided then, as Mr. Disraeli's novel described it, into two nations, the rich and the poor, in towns at least; and each hated and feared the other with all that unthinking hate and fear which hostile nations are capable of showing even amid all the influences of civilisation.

## CHAPTER VI.

*QUESTION DE JUPONS.*

MEANWHILE things were looking ill with the Melbourne Ministry. Sir Robert Peel was addressing great meetings of his followers, and declaring with much show of justice that he had created anew the Conservative party. The position of the Whigs would in any case have been difficult. Their mandate, to use the French phrase, seemed to be exhausted. They had no new thing to propose. They came into power as reformers, and now they had nothing to offer in the way of reform. It may be taken as a certainty that in English politics reaction must always follow advance. The Whigs must just then have come in for the effects of reaction. But they had more than that to contend with. In our own time, Mr. Gladstone had no sooner passed his great measures of reform than he began to experience the effects of reaction. But there was a great difference between his situation and that of the Whigs under Melbourne. He had not failed to satisfy the demands of his followers. He had no extreme wing of his party clamouring against him on the ground that he had made use of their strength to help him in carrying out as much of his programme as

suited his own *coterie*, and that he had then deserted them. This was the condition of the Whigs. The more advanced Liberals and the whole body of the Chartists, and the working classes generally, detested and denounced them. Many of the Liberals had had some hope while Lord Durham still seemed likely to be a political power, but with the fading of his influence they lost all interest in the Whig Ministry. On the other hand the support of O'Connell was a serious disadvantage to Melbourne and his party in England.

But the Whig ministers were always adding by some mistake or other to the difficulties of their position. The Jamaica Bill put them in great perplexity. This was a measure brought in on April 9, 1839, to make temporary provision for the government of the island of Jamaica, by setting aside the House of Assembly for five years, and during that time empowering the governor and council with three salaried commissioners to manage the affairs of the colony. In other words, the Melbourne Ministry proposed to suspend for five years the constitution of Jamaica. No body of persons can be more awkwardly placed than a Whig Ministry proposing to set aside a constitutional government anywhere. Such a proposal may be a necessary measure; it may be unavoidable; but it always comes with a bad grace from Whigs or Liberals, and gives their enemies a handle against them which they cannot fail to use to some purpose. What, indeed, it may be plausibly asked, is the *raison d'être* of a Liberal Government if they have to return to the old Tory policy of suspended constitutions and

absolute law? When Rabagas, become minister, tells his master that the only way to silence discontent is by the liberal use of the cannon, the Prince of Monaco remarks very naturally that if that was to be the policy, he might as well have kept to his old ministers and his absolutism. So it is with an English Liberal Ministry advising the suspension of constitutions.

In the case of the Jamaica Bill there was some excuse for the harsh policy. After the abolition of slavery, the former masters in the island found it very hard to reconcile themselves to the new condition of things. They could not all at once understand that their former slaves were to be their equals before the law. As we have seen much more lately in the Southern States of America after the civil war and the emancipation of the negroes, there was still a pertinacious attempt made by the planter class to regain in substance the power they had had to renounce in name. This was not to be justified or excused; but as human nature is made it was not unnatural. On the other hand, some of the Jamaica negroes were too ignorant to understand that they had acquired any rights; others were a little too clamorous in their assertion. Many a planter worked his men and whipped his women just as before the emancipation, and the victims did not understand that they had any right to complain. Many negroes, again, were ignorantly and thoughtlessly 'bumptious,' to use a vulgar expression, in the assertion of their newly-found equality. The Imperial governors and offi-



cials were generally and justly eager to protect the negroes ; and the result was a constant quarrel between the Jamaica House of Assembly and the representatives of the home Government. The Assembly became more insolent and offensive every day. A bill, very necessary in itself, was passed by the Imperial Parliament for the better regulation of prisons in Jamaica, and the House of Assembly refused to submit to any such legislation. Under these circumstances the Melbourne Ministry proposed the suspension of the constitution of the island. The measure was opposed, not only by Peel and the Conservatives, but by many Radicals. It was argued that there were many courses open to the Ministry short of the high-handed proceeding they proposed ; and in truth there was not that confidence in the Melbourne Ministry at all which would have enabled them to obtain from Parliament a majority sufficient to carry through such a policy. The Ministry was weak and discredited ; anybody might now throw a stone at it. They only had a majority of five in favour of their measure. This, of course, was a virtual defeat. The Ministry acknowledged it and resigned. Their defeat was a humiliation ; their resignation an inevitable submission ; but they came back to office almost immediately under conditions that made the humiliation more humbling, and rendered their subsequent career more difficult by far than their past struggle for existence had been.

The return of the Whigs to office—for they cannot be said to have returned to power—came about

in a very odd way. Gulliver ought to have had an opportunity of telling such a story to the king of the Brobdingnagians, in order the better to impress him with a clear idea of the logical beauty of constitutional government. It was an entirely new illustration of the old *cherchez la femme* principle, the *femme* in this case, however, being altogether a passive and innocent cause of trouble. The famous controversy known as the 'Bedchamber Question' made a way back for the Whigs into place. When Lord Melbourne resigned, the Queen sent for the Duke of Wellington, who advised her to apply to Sir Robert Peel, for the reason that the chief difficulties of a Conservative Government would be in the House of Commons. The Queen sent for Peel, and when he came, told him with a simple and girlish frankness that she was sorry to have to part with her late ministers, of whose conduct she entirely approved, but that she bowed to constitutional usage. This must have been rather an astonishing beginning to the grave and formal Peel; but he was not a man to think any worse of the candid young Sovereign for her outspoken ways. The negotiations went on very smoothly as to the colleagues Peel meant to recommend to her Majesty, until he happened to notice the composition of the royal household as regarded the ladies most closely in attendance on the Queen. For example, he found that the wife of Lord Normanby and the sister of Lord Morpeth were the two ladies in closest attendance on her Majesty. Now it has to be borne in mind—it was proclaimed again

and again during the negotiations—that the chief difficulty of the Conservatives would necessarily be in Ireland, where their policy would be altogether opposed to that of the Whigs. Lord Normanby had been Lord Lieutenant of Ireland under the Whigs, and Lord Morpeth, whom we can all remember as the amiable and accomplished Lord Carlisle of later time, Irish Secretary. It certainly could not be satisfactory for Peel to try to work a new Irish policy while the closest household companions of the Queen were the wife and sister of the displaced statesmen who directly represented the policy he had to supersede. Had this point of view been made clear to the Sovereign at first, it is hardly possible that any serious difficulty could have arisen. The Queen must have seen the obvious reasonableness of Peel's request; nor is it to be supposed that the two ladies in question could have desired to hold their places under such circumstances. But unluckily some misunderstanding took place at the very beginning of the conversations on this point. Peel only desired to press for the retirement of the ladies holding the higher offices; he did not intend to ask for any change affecting a place lower in official rank than that of lady of the bedchamber. But somehow or other he conveyed to the mind of the Queen a different idea. She thought he meant to insist, as a matter of principle, upon the removal of all her familiar attendants and household associates. Under this impression she consulted Lord John Russell, who advised her on what he understood to be the

state of the facts. On his advice the Queen stated in reply that she could not 'consent to a course which she conceives to be contrary to usage and is repugnant to her feelings.' Sir Robert Peel held firm to his stipulation; and the chance of his then forming a Ministry was at an end. Lord Melbourne and his colleagues had to be recalled; and at a Cabinet meeting they adopted a minute declaring it reasonable 'that the great offices of the Court and situations in the household held by members of Parliament should be included in the political arrangements made on a change in the Administration; but they are not of opinion that a similar principle should be applied or extended to the offices held by ladies in her Majesty's household.'

The matter was naturally made the subject of explanation in both Houses of Parliament. Sir Robert Peel was undoubtedly right in his view of the question, and if he had been clearly understood the right could hardly have been disputed; but he defended his position in language of what now seems rather ludicrous exaggeration. He treated this *question de jupon* as if it were of the last importance not alone to the honour of the Ministry, but even to the safety of the realm. 'I ask you,' he said 'to go back to other times: take Pitt or Fox, or any other minister of this proud country, and answer for yourselves the question, is it fitting that one man shall be the minister, responsible for the most arduous charge that can fall to the lot of man, and that the wife of the other—that other his most formidable political

enemy—shall, with his express consent, hold office in immediate attendance on the Sovereign?’ ‘Oh, no!’ he exclaimed, in an outburst of indignant eloquence. ‘I felt that it was impossible; I could not consent to this. Feelings more powerful than reasoning told me that it was not for my own honour or for the public interests that I should consent to be minister of England.’ This high-flown language seems oddly out of place on the lips of a statesman who of all his contemporaries was the least apt to indulge in bursts of overwrought sentiment. Lord Melbourne, on the other hand, defended his action in the House of Lords in language of equal exaggeration. ‘I resume office,’ he said, ‘unequivocally and solely for this reason, that I will not desert my Sovereign in a situation of difficulty and distress, especially when a demand is made upon her Majesty with which I think she ought not to comply; a demand inconsistent with her personal honour, and which, if acquiesced in, would render her reign liable to all the changes and variations of political parties, and make her domestic life one constant scene of unhappiness and discomfort.’

In the country the incident created great excitement. Some Liberals bluntly insisted that it was not right in such a matter to consult the feelings of the Sovereign at all, and that the advice of the minister, and his idea of what was for the good of the country, ought alone to be considered. On the other hand, O’Connell burst into impassioned language of praise and delight, as he dwelt upon

the decision of the Queen, and called upon the Powers above to bless 'the young creature—that creature of only nineteen, as pure as she is exalted,' who consulted not her head but 'the overflowing feelings of her young heart.' 'Those excellent women who had been so long attached to her, who had nursed and tended to her wants in her childhood, who had watched over her in her sickness, whose eyes beamed with delight as they saw her increasing daily in beauty and in loveliness—when they were threatened to be forced away from her—her heart told her that she could as well part with that heart itself as with those whom it held so dear.' Feargus O'Connor went a good deal further, however, when he boldly declared that he had excellent authority for the statement, that if the Tories had got the young Queen into their hands by the agency of the new ladies of the bedchamber, they had a plan for putting her out of the way and placing 'the bloody Cumberland' on the throne in her stead. In O'Connell's case, no mystery was made of the fact that he believed the ladies actually surrounding the young Queen to be friendly to what he considered the cause of Ireland; and that he was satisfied Peel and the Tories were against it. For the wild talk represented by the words of Feargus O'Connor, it is only necessary to say that, frenzied and foolish as it must seem now to us, and as it must even then have seemed to all rational beings, it had the firm acceptance of large masses of people throughout the country, who persisted in seeing in Peel's pleadings

for the change of the bedchamber women the positive evidence of an unscrupulous Tory plot to get possession of the Queen's person, not indeed for the purpose of violently altering the succession, but in the hope of poisoning her mind against all Liberal opinions.

Lord Brougham was not likely to lose so good an opportunity of attacking Lord Melbourne and his colleagues. He insisted that Lord Melbourne had sacrificed Liberal principles and the interests of the country to the private feelings of the Sovereign. 'I thought,' he declared in a burst of eloquent passion, 'that we belonged to a country in which the government by the Crown and the wisdom of Parliament was everything, and the personal feelings of the Sovereign were absolutely not to be named at the same time. . . . I little thought to have lived to hear it said by the Whigs of 1839, "Let us rally round the Queen ; never mind the House of Commons ; never mind measures ; throw principles to the dogs ; leave pledges unredeemed ; but for God's sake rally round the throne." Little did I think the day would come when I should hear such language, not from the unconstitutional, place-hunting, king-loving Tories, who thought the public was made for the king, not the king for the public, but from the Whigs themselves ! The Jamaica Bill, said to be a most important measure, had been brought forward. The Government staked their existence upon it. They were not able to carry it ; they therefore conceived they had lost the confidence of the House of Commons.

They thought it a measure of paramount necessity then. Is it less necessary now ? Oh, but that is altered ! The Jamaica question is to be new-fashioned ; principles are to be given up, and all because of two ladies of the bedchamber.'

Nothing could be more undesirable than the position in which Lord Melbourne and his colleagues had allowed the Sovereign to place herself. The more people in general came to think over the matter, the more clearly it was seen that Peel was in the right, although he had not made himself understood at first, and had, perhaps, not shown all through enough of consideration for the novelty of the young Sovereign's position, or for the difficulty of finding a conclusive precedent on such a question, seeing that since the principle of ministerial responsibility had come to be recognised among us in its genuine sense, there never before had been a woman on the throne. But no one could deliberately maintain the position at first taken up by the Whigs ; and in point of fact they were soon glad to drop it as quickly and quietly as possible. The whole question, it may be said at once, was afterwards settled by a sensible compromise which the Prince Consort suggested. It was agreed that on a change of Ministry the Queen would listen to any representation from the incoming Prime Minister as to the composition of her household, and would arrange for the retirement 'of their own accord' of any ladies who were so closely related to the leaders of Opposition as to render their presence inconvenient. The Whigs



came back to office utterly discredited. They had to tinker up somehow a new Jamaica Bill. They had declared that they could not remain in office unless they were allowed to deal in a certain way with Jamaica ; and now that they were back again in office, they could not avoid trying to do something with the Jamaica business. They therefore introduced a new bill which was a mere compromise put together in the hope of its being allowed to pass. It was allowed to pass, after a fashion ; that is, when the Opposition in the House of Lords had tinkered it and amended it at their pleasure. The bedchamber question in fact had thrown Jamaica out of perspective. The unfortunate island must do the best it could now ; in this country statesmen had graver matter to think of. Sir Robert Peel could not govern with Lady Normanby ; the Whigs would not govern without her.

It does not seem by any means clear, however, that Lord Melbourne and his colleagues deserved the savage censure of Lord Brougham merely for having returned to office and given up their original position with regard to the Jamaica Bill. What else remained to be done ? If they had refused to come back, the only result would have been that Peel must have become Prime Minister, with a distinct minority in the House of Commons. Peel could not have held his ground there, except by the favour and mercy of his opponents ; and those were not merciful days in politics. He would only have taken office to be called upon at once to resign it by some adverse vote of the

House of Commons. The state of things seems in this respect to be not unlike that which existed when Mr. Gladstone was defeated on the Irish University Bill in 1873. Mr. Gladstone resigned; or rather tendered his resignation; and by his advice her Majesty invited Mr. Disraeli to form a Cabinet. Mr. Disraeli did not see his way to undertake the government of the country with the existing House of Commons; and as the conditions under which he was willing to undertake the duty were not conveniently attainable, the negotiation came to an end. The Queen sent again for Mr. Gladstone, who consented to resume his place as Prime Minister. If Lord Melbourne returned to office with the knowledge that he could not carry the Jamaica Bill which he had declared to be necessary, Mr. Gladstone resumed his place at the head of his Ministry without the remotest hope of being able to carry his Irish University measure. No one ever found fault with Mr. Gladstone for having, under the circumstances, done the best he could, and consented to meet the request of the Sovereign and the convenience of the public service by again taking on himself the responsibility of government, although the measure on which he had declared he would stake the existence of his Ministry had been rejected by the House of Commons.

Still it cannot be denied that the Melbourne Government were prejudiced in the public mind by these events, and by the attacks for which they gave so large an opportunity. The feeling in some parts

of the country was still sentimentally with the Queen. At many a dinner table it became the fashion to drink the health of her Majesty with a punning addition, not belonging to an order of wit any higher than that which in other days toasted the King 'over the water;' or prayed of heaven to 'send this crumb well down.' The Queen was toasted as the sovereign of spirit who 'would not let her belles be peeled.' But the Ministry were almost universally believed to have placed themselves in a ridiculous light, and to have crept again into office, as an able writer puts it, 'behind the petticoats of the ladies in waiting.' The death of Lady Flora Hastings, which occurred almost immediately, tended further to arouse a feeling of dislike to the Whigs. This melancholy event does not need any lengthened comment. A young lady who belonged to the household of the Duchess of Kent fell under an unfounded, but in the circumstances not wholly unreasonable, suspicion. It was the classic story of Calisto, Diana's unhappy nymph, reversed. Lady Flora was proved to be innocent; but her death, imminent probably in any case from the disease which had fastened on her, was doubtless hastened by the humiliation to which she had been subjected. It does not seem that anyone was to blame in the matter. The Ministry certainly do not appear to have done anything for which they could fairly be reproached. No one can be surprised that those who surrounded the Queen and the Duchess of Kent should have taken some pains to inquire into the truth or falsehood of scandalous rumours, for

which there might have appeared to be some obvious justification. But the whole story was so sad and shocking ; the death of the poor young lady followed with such tragic rapidity upon the establishment of her innocence ; the natural complaints of her mother were so loud and impassioned, that the ministers who had to answer the mother's appeals were unavoidably placed in an invidious and a painful position. The demands of the Marchioness of Hastings for redress were unreasonable. They endeavoured to make out the existence of a cruel conspiracy against Lady Flora, and called for the peremptory dismissal and disgrace of the eminent court physician, who had merely performed a most painful duty, and whose report had been the especial means of establishing the injustice of the suspicions which were directed against her. But it was a damaging duty for a minister to have to write to the distracted mother, as Lord Melbourne found it necessary to do, telling her that her demand was 'so unprecedented and objectionable, that even the respect due to your ladyship's sex, rank, family and character would not justify me in more, if indeed it authorises so much, than acknowledging that letter for the sole purpose of acquainting your ladyship that I have received it.' The 'Palace scandal,' as it was called, became known shortly before the dispute about the ladies of the bedchamber. The death of Lady Flora Hastings happened soon after it. It is not strictly in logical propriety that such events, or their rapid succession, should tend to bring into disrepute the Ministry who

can only be regarded as their historical contemporaries. But the world must 'change a great deal before ministers are no longer held accountable in public opinion for anything but the events over which they can be shown to have some control.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE QUEEN'S MARRIAGE.

ON January 16, 1840, the Queen, opening Parliament in person, announced her intention to marry her cousin, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha—a step which she trusted would be ‘conducive to the interests of my people as well as to my own domestic happiness.’ In the discussion which followed in the House of Commons, Sir Robert Peel observed that her Majesty had ‘the singular good fortune to be able to gratify her private feelings, while she performs her public duty, and to obtain the best guarantee for happiness by contracting an alliance founded on affection.’ Peel spoke the simple truth; it was indeed a marriage founded on affection. No marriage contracted in the humblest class could have been more entirely a union of love, and more free from what might be called selfish and worldly considerations. The Queen had for a long time loved her cousin. He was nearly her own age, the Queen being the elder by three months and two or three days. Francis Charles Augustus Albert Emmanuel was the full name of the young Prince. He was the second son of Ernest, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, and of his wife Louisa, daughter of Augustus Duke

of Saxe-Gotha-Altenberg. Prince Albert was born at the Rosenau, one of his father's residences, near Coburg, on August 26, 1819. The Court historian notices with pardonable complacency the 'remarkable coincidence'—easily explained, surely—that the same *accoucheuse*, Madame Siebold, assisted at the birth of Prince Albert, and of the Queen some three months before, and that the Prince was baptised by the clergyman, Professor Genzler, who had the year before officiated at the marriage of the Duke and Duchess of Kent. A marriage between the Princess Victoria and Prince Albert had been thought of as desirable among the families on both sides, but it was always wisely resolved that nothing should be said to the young Princess on the subject unless she herself showed a distinct liking for her cousin. In 1836, Prince Albert was brought by his father to England, and made the personal acquaintance of the Princess, and she seems at once to have been drawn towards him in the manner which her family and friends would most have desired. Three years later the Prince again came to England, and the Queen, in a letter to her uncle, the King of the Belgians, wrote of him in the warmest terms. 'Albert's beauty,' she said, 'is most striking, and he is most amiable and unaffected—in short, very fascinating.' Not many days after she wrote to another friend and faithful counsellor, the Baron Stockmar, to say, 'I do feel so guilty I know not how to begin my letter; but I think the news it will contain will be sufficient to ensure your forgiveness. Albert has completely won

my heart, and all was settled between us this morning.' The Queen had just before informed Lord Melbourne of her intention, and Lord Melbourne, it is needless to say, expressed his decided approval. There was no one to disapprove of such a marriage.

Prince Albert was a young man to win the heart of any girl. He was singularly handsome, graceful and gifted. In princes, as we know, a small measure of beauty and accomplishment suffices to throw courtiers and court ladies into transports of admiration; but had Prince Albert been the son of a farmer or a butler, he must have been admired for his singular personal attractions. He had had a sound and a varied education. He had been brought up as if he were to be a professional musician, a professional chemist or botanist, and a professor of history and belles lettres and the fine arts. The scientific and the literary were remarkably blended in his bringing-up; remarkably, that is to say, for some half-century ago, when even in Germany a system of education seldom aimed at being *totus, teres atque rotundus*. He had begun to study the constitutional history of States, and was preparing himself to take an interest in politics. There was much of the practical and business-like about him, as he showed in after-life; he loved farming and took a deep interest in machinery and in the growth of industrial science. He was a sort of combination of the troubadour, the *savant*, and the man of business. His tastes were for a quiet, domestic and unostentatious life—a life of refined culture, of happy calm evenings, of art and poetry and genial com-



munion with Nature. He was made happy by the songs of birds, and delighted in sitting alone and playing the organ. But there was in him too a great deal of the political philosopher. He loved to hear political and other questions well argued out, and once observed that a false argument jarred on his nerves as much as a false note in music. He seems to have had from his youth an all-pervading sense of duty. So far as we can guess, he was almost absolutely free from the ordinary follies, not to say sins, of youth. Young as he was when he married the Queen, he devoted himself at once to what he conscientiously believed to be the duties of his station with a self-control and self-devotion rare even among the aged, and almost unknown in youth. He gave up every habit, however familiar and dear, every predilection no matter how sweet, every indulgence of sentiment or amusement, that in any way threatened to interfere with the steadfast performance of the part he had assigned to himself. No man ever devoted himself more faithfully to the difficult duties of a high and a new situation, or kept more strictly to his resolve. It was no task to him to be a tender husband and a loving father. This was a part of his sweet, pure and affectionate nature. It may well be doubted whether any other queen ever had a married life so happy as that of Queen Victoria.

The marriage of the Queen and the Prince took place on February 10, 1840. The reception given by the people in general to the Prince on his landing in England a few days before the ceremony, and on the

day of the marriage, was cordial and even enthusiastic. But it is not certain whether there was a very cordial feeling to the Prince among all classes of politicians. A rumour of the most absurd kind had got abroad in certain circles that the young Albert was not a Protestant—that he was in fact a member of the Church of Rome. In a different circle the belief was curiously cherished that the Prince was a free-thinker in matters of religion and a radical in politics. Somewhat unfortunately, the declaration of the intended marriage to the Privy Council did not mention the fact that Albert was a Protestant Prince. The Cabinet no doubt thought that the leaders of public opinion on all sides of politics would have had historical knowledge among them to teach them that Prince Albert belonged to that branch of the Saxon family which since the Reformation had been conspicuously Protestant. ‘There has not,’ Prince Albert himself wrote to the Queen on December 7, 1839, ‘been a single Catholic princess introduced into the Coburg family since the appearance of Luther in 1521. Moreover the Elector Frederick the Wise of Saxony was the very first Protestant that ever lived.’ No doubt the Ministry thought also that the constitutional rule which forbids an English sovereign to marry with a Roman Catholic under penalty of forfeiting the crown, would be regarded as a sufficient guarantee that when they announced the Queen’s approaching marriage it must be a marriage with a Protestant. All this assumption, however reasonable and natural, did not find warrant in the events that actually took place.

It would have been better of course if the Government had assumed that Parliament and the public generally knew nothing about the Prince and his ancestry, or the constitutional penalties for a member of the Royal Family marrying a Catholic, and had formally announced that the choice of Queen Victoria had happily fallen on a Protestant. The wise and foreseeing Leopold, King of the Belgians, had recommended that the fact should be specifically mentioned ; but it was perhaps a part of Lord Melbourne's indolent good nature to take it for granted that people generally would be calm and reasonable, and that all would go right without interruption or cavil. He therefore acted on the assumption that any formal mention of Prince Albert's Protestantism would be superfluous ; and neither in the declaration to the Privy Council, nor in the announcement to Parliament, was a word said upon the subject. The result was that in the debate on the address in the House of Lords a somewhat unseemly altercation took place, an altercation the more to be regretted because it might have been so easily spared. The question was bluntly raised by no less a person than the Duke of Wellington whether the future husband of the Queen was or was not a Protestant. The Duke actually charged the Ministry with having purposely left out the word ' Protestant ' in the announcements in order that they might not offend their Irish and Catholic supporters, and by the very charge did much to strengthen the popular feeling against the statesmen who were supposed to be kept in office by virtue of

the patronage of O'Connell. The Duke moved that the word 'Protestant' be inserted in the congratulatory address to the Queen, and he carried his point, although Lord Melbourne held to the opinion that the word was unnecessary in describing a Prince who was not only a Protestant but descended from the most Protestant family in Europe. The lack of judgment and tact on the part of the Ministry was never more clearly shown than in the original omission of the word.

Another disagreeable occurrence was the discussion that took place when the bill for the naturalisation of the Prince was brought before the House of Lords. The bill in its title merely set out the proposal to provide for the naturalisation of the Prince ; but it contained a clause to give him precedence for life 'next after her Majesty, in Parliament or elsewhere, as her Majesty might think proper.' A great deal of objection was raised by the Duke of Wellington and Lord Brougham to this clause on its own merits ; but, as was natural, the objections were infinitely aggravated by the singular want of judgment, and even of common propriety, which could introduce a clause conferring on the Sovereign powers so large and so new into a mere naturalisation bill, without any previous notice to Parliament. The matter was ultimately settled by allowing the bill to remain a simple naturalisation measure, and leaving the question of precedence to be dealt with by Royal prerogative. Both the great political parties concurred without further difficulty in an arrangement

by which it was provided in letters patent that the Prince should thenceforth upon all occasions, and in all meetings, except when otherwise provided by Act of Parliament, have precedence next to the Queen. There never would have been any difficulty in the matter if the Ministry had acted with any discretion ; but it would be absurd to expect that a great nation, whose constitutional system is built up of precedents, should agree at once and without demur to every new arrangement which it might seem convenient to a Ministry to make in a hurry. Yet another source of dissatisfaction to the palace and the people was created by the manner in which the Ministry took upon themselves to bring forward the proposition for the settlement of an annuity on the Prince. In former cases—that, for example, of Queen Charlotte, Queen Adelaide, and Prince Leopold on his marriage with the Princess Charlotte—the annuity granted had been 50,000*l*. It so happened, however, that the settlement to be made on Prince Albert came in times of great industrial and commercial distress. The days had gone by when economy in the House of Commons was looked upon as an ignoble principle, and when loyalty to the Sovereign was believed to bind members of Parliament to grant without a murmur of discussion any sums that might be asked by the minister in the Sovereign's name. Parliament was beginning to feel more thoroughly its responsibility as the guardian of the nation's resources, and it was no longer thought a fine thing to give away the money of the taxpayer with magnani-

mous indifference. It was therefore absurd on the part of the Ministry to suppose that because great sums of money had been voted without question on former occasions, they would be voted without question now. It is quite possible that the whole matter might have been settled without controversy if the Ministry had shown any judgment whatever in their conduct of the business. In our day the Ministry would at once have consulted the leaders of the Opposition. In all matters where the grant of money to anyone connected with the Sovereign is concerned, it is now understood that the gift shall come with the full concurrence of both parties in Parliament. The leader of the House of Commons would probably, by arrangement, propose the grant, and the leader of the Opposition would second it. In the case of the annuity to Prince Albert, the Ministry had the almost incredible folly to bring forward their proposal without having invited in any way the concurrence of the Opposition. They introduced the proposal without discretion ; they conducted the discussion on it without temper. They answered the most reasonable objections with imputations of want of loyalty ; and they gave some excuse for the suspicion that they wished to provoke the Opposition into some expression that might make them odious to the Queen and the Prince. Mr. Hume, the economist, proposed that the annuity be reduced from 50,000*l.* to 21,000*l.* This was negatived. Thereupon Colonel Sibthorp, a once famous Tory fanatic of the most eccentric manners and opinions, proposed that the sum be

30,000*l.*, and he received the support of Sir Robert Peel and other eminent members of the Opposition ; and the amendment was carried.

These were not auspicious incidents to prelude the Royal marriage. There can be no doubt that for a time the Queen, still more than the Prince, felt their influence keenly. The Prince showed remarkable good sense and appreciation of the condition of political arrangements in England, and readily comprehended that there was nothing personal to himself in any objections which the House of Commons might have made to the proposals of the Ministry. The question of precedence was very easily settled when it came to be discussed in reasonable fashion ; although it was not until many years after, 1857, that the title of Prince Consort was given to the husband of the Queen.

A few months after the marriage, a bill was passed providing for a regency in the possible event of the death of the Queen, leaving issue. With the entire concurrence of the leaders of the Opposition, who were consulted this time, Prince Albert was named Regent, following the precedent which had been adopted in the instance of the Princess Charlotte and Prince Leopold. The Duke of Sussex, uncle of the Queen, alone dissented in the House of Lords, and recorded his protest against the proposal. The passing of this bill was naturally regarded as of much importance to Prince Albert. It gave him to some extent the status in the country which he had not had before. It also proved that the Prince him-

self had risen in the estimation of the Tory party during the few months that elapsed since the debates on the annuity and the question of precedence. No one could have started with a more resolute determination to stand clear of party politics than Prince Albert. He accepted at once his position as the husband of the Queen of a constitutional country. His own idea of his duty was that he should be the private secretary and unofficial counsellor of the Queen. To this purpose he devoted himself unswervingly. Outside that part of his duties, he constituted himself a sort of minister without portfolio of art and education. He took an interest, and often a leading part, in all projects and movements relating to the spread of education, the culture of art, and the promotion of industrial science. Yet it was long before he was thoroughly understood by the country. It was long before he became in any degree popular; and it may be doubted whether he ever was thoroughly and generally popular. Not perhaps until his untimely death did the country find out how entirely disinterested and faithful his life had been, and how he had made the discharge of duty his business and his task. His character was one which is liable to be regarded by ordinary observers as possessing none but negative virtues. He was thought to be cold, formal and apathetic. His manners were somewhat shy and constrained, except when he was in the company of those he loved, and then he commonly relaxed into a kind of boyish freedom and joyousness. But to the public in general he seemed formal and



chilling. It is not only Mr. Pendennis who conceals his gentleness under a shy and pompous demeanour. With all his ability, his anxiety to learn, his capacity for patient study, and his willingness to welcome new ideas, he never perhaps quite understood the genius of the English political system. His faithful friend and counsellor, Baron Stockmar, was not the man best calculated to set him right on this subject. Both were far too eager to find in the English Constitution a piece of symmetrical mechanism, or to treat it as a written code from which one might take extracts or construct summaries for constant reference and guidance. But this was not in the beginning the cause of any coldness towards the Prince on the part of the English public. Prince Albert had not the ways of an Englishman, and the tendency of Englishmen, then as now, was to assume that to have manners other than those of an Englishman was to be so far unworthy of confidence. He was not made to shine in commonplace society. He could talk admirably about something, but he had not the gift of talking about nothing, and probably would not have cared much to cultivate such a faculty. He was fond of suggesting small innovations and improvements in established systems, to the annoyance of men with set ideas, who liked their own ways best. Thus it happened that he remained for many years, if not exactly unappreciated, yet not thoroughly appreciated, and that a considerable and very influential section of society was always ready to cavil at what he said, and find motive for suspicion in most things

that he did. Perhaps he was best understood and most cordially appreciated among the poorer classes of his wife's subjects. He found also more cordial approval generally among the Radicals than among the Tories, or even the Whigs.

One reform which Prince Albert worked earnestly to bring about, was the abolition of duelling in the army, and the substitution of some system of courts of honourable arbitration to supersede the barbaric recourse to the decision of weapons. He did not succeed in having his courts of honour established. There was something too fanciful in the scheme to attract the authorities of our two services; and there were undoubtedly many practical difficulties in the way of making such a system effective. But he succeeded so far, that he induced the Duke of Wellington and the heads of the services to turn their attention very seriously to the subject, and to use all the influence in their power for the purpose of discouraging and discrediting the odious practice of the duel. It is carrying courtly politeness too far to attribute the total disappearance of the duelling system, as one biographer seems inclined to do, to the personal efforts of Prince Albert. It is enough to his honour that he did his best, and that the best was a substantial contribution towards so great an object. But nothing can testify more strikingly to the rapid growth of a genuine civilisation in Queen Victoria's reign than the utter discontinuance of the duelling system. When the Queen came to the throne, and for years after, it was still in full force. The duel plays a con-

spicuous part in the fiction and the drama of the reign's earlier years. It was a common incident of all political controversies. It was an episode of most contested elections. It was often resorted to for the purpose of deciding the right or wrong of a half-drunken quarrel over a card table. It formed as common a theme of gossip as an elopement or a bankruptcy. Most of the eminent statesmen who were prominent in the earlier part of the Queen's reign had fought duels. Peel and O'Connell had made arrangements for a 'meeting.' Mr. Disraeli had challenged O'Connell or any of the sons of O'Connell. The great agitator himself had killed his man in a duel. Mr. Roebuck had gone out ; Mr. Cobden at a much later period had been visited with a challenge, and had had the good sense and the moral courage to laugh at it. At the present hour a duel in England would seem as absurd and barbarous an anachronism as an ordeal by touch or a witch-burning. Many years have passed since a duel was last talked of in Parliament ; and then it was only the subject of a reprobation that had some work to do to keep its countenance while administering the proper rebuke. But it was not the influence of any one man, or even any class of men, that brought about in so short a time this striking change in the tone of public feeling and morality. The change was part of the growth of education and of civilisation ; of the strengthening and broadening influence of the press, the platform, the cheap book, the pulpit, and the less restricted intercourse of classes.

This is perhaps as suitable a place as any other to introduce some notice of the attempts that were made from time to time upon the life of the Queen. It is proper to say something of them, although not one possessed the slightest political importance, or could be said to illustrate anything more than sheer lunacy, or that morbid vanity and thirst for notoriety that is nearly akin to genuine madness. The first attempt was made on June 10, 1840, by Edward Oxford, a potboy of seventeen, who fired two shots at the Queen as she was driving up Constitution Hill with Prince Albert. Oxford fired both shots deliberately enough, but happily missed in each case. He proved to have been an absurd creature, half crazy with a longing to consider himself a political prisoner and to be talked of. When he was tried, the jury pronounced him insane, and he was ordered to be kept in a lunatic asylum during her Majesty's pleasure. The trial completely dissipated some wild alarms that were felt, founded chiefly on absurd papers in Oxford's possession, about a tremendous secret society called 'Young England,' having among its other objects the assassination of royal personages. It is not an uninteresting illustration of the condition of public feeling that some of the Irish Catholic papers in seeming good faith denounced Oxford as an agent of the Duke of Cumberland and the Orangemen, and declared that the object was to assassinate the Queen and put the Duke on the throne. The trial showed that Oxford was the agent of nobody, and was impelled by nothing but his own crack-brained love of notoriety. The

finding of the jury was evidently something of a compromise, for it is very doubtful whether the boy was insane in the medical sense, and whether he was fairly to be held irresponsible for his actions. But it was felt perhaps that the wisest course was to treat him as a madman ; and the result did not prove unsatisfactory. Mr. Theodore Martin, in his 'Life of the Prince Consort,' expresses a different opinion. He thinks it would have been well if Oxford had been dealt with as guilty in the ordinary way. 'The best commentary,' he says, 'on the lenity thus shown was pronounced by Oxford himself, on being told of the similar attempts of Francis and Bean in 1842, when he declared that if he had been hanged there would have been no more shooting at the Queen.' It may be reasonably doubted whether the authority of Oxford as to the general influence of criminal legislation is very valuable. Against the philosophic opinion of the half-crazy young potboy on which Mr. Martin places so much reliance, may be set the fact, that in other countries where attempts on the life of the sovereign have been punished by the stern award of death, it has not been found that the execution of one fanatic was a safe protection against the murderous fanaticism of another.

On May 30, 1842, a man named John Francis, son of a machinist in Drury Lane, fired a pistol at the Queen as she was driving down Constitution Hill, on the very spot where Oxford's attempt was made. This was a somewhat serious attempt, for Francis was not more than a few feet from the carriage, which

fortunately was driving at a very rapid rate. The Queen showed great composure. She was in some measure prepared for the attempt, for it seems certain that the same man had on the previous evening presented a pistol at the royal carriage, although he did not then fire it. Francis was arrested and put on trial. He was only twenty-two years of age, and although at first he endeavoured to brazen it out and put on a sort of melodramatic regicide aspect, yet when the sentence of death for high treason was passed on him he fell into a swoon and was carried insensible from the court. The sentence was not carried into effect. It was not certain whether the pistol was loaded at all, and whether the whole performance was not a mere piece of brutal play-acting done out of a longing to be notorious. Her Majesty herself was anxious that the death sentence should not be carried into effect, and it was finally commuted to one of transportation for life. The very day after this mitigation of punishment became publicly known another attempt was made by a hunch-backed lad named Bean. As the Queen was passing from Buckingham Palace to the Chapel Royal, Bean presented a pistol at her carriage, but did not succeed in firing it before his hand was seized by a prompt and courageous boy who was standing near. The pistol was found to be loaded with powder, paper closely rammed down, and some scraps of a clay pipe. It may be asked whether the argument of Mr. Martin is not fully borne out by this occurrence, and whether the fact of Bean's attempt having been made on the day

after the commutation of the capital sentence in the case of Francis is not evidence that the leniency in the former instance was the cause of the attempt made in the latter. But it was made clear, and the fact is recorded on the authority of Prince Albert himself, that Bean had announced his determination to make the attempt several days before the sentence of Francis was commuted, and while Francis was actually lying under sentence of death. With regard to Francis himself, the Prince was clearly of opinion that to carry out the capital sentence would have been nothing less than a judicial murder, as it is essential that the act should be committed with intent to kill or wound, and in Francis's case to all appearance this was not the fact, or at least it was open to grave doubt. In this calm and wise way did the husband of the Queen, who had always shared with her whatever of danger there might be in the attempts, argue as to the manner in which they ought to be dealt with. The ambition which most or all of the miscreants who thus disturbed the Queen and the country was that of the mountebank rather than of the assassin. The Queen herself showed how thoroughly she understood the significance of all that had happened, when she declared, according to Mr. Martin, that she expected a repetition of the attempts on her life so long as the law remained unaltered by which they could be dealt with only as acts of high treason. The seeming dignity of martyrdom had something fascinating in it to morbid vanity or crazy fanaticism, while on the other hand it was almost certain that the martyr's penalty would

not in the end be inflicted. A very appropriate change in the law was effected by which a punishment at once sharp and degrading was provided even for mere mountebank attempts against the Queen ; a punishment which was certain to be inflicted. A bill was introduced by Sir Robert Peel making such attempts punishable by transportation for seven years, or by imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years, ' the culprit to be publicly or privately whipped as often and in such manner as the court shall direct, not exceeding thrice.' Bean was convicted under this act and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment in Millbank Penitentiary. This did not, however, conclude the attacks on the Queen. An Irish bricklayer, named Hamilton, fired a pistol, charged only with powder, at her Majesty, on Constitution Hill, on May 19, 1849, and was sentenced to seven years' transportation. A man named Robert Pate, once a lieutenant of hussars, struck her Majesty on the face with a stick as she was leaving the Duke of Cambridge's residence in her carriage on May 27, 1850. This man was sentenced to seven years' transportation, but the judge paid so much attention to the plea of insanity set up on his behalf, as to omit from his punishment the whipping which might have been ordered. Finally, on February 29, 1872, a lad of seventeen, named Arthur O'Connor, presented a pistol at the Queen as she was entering Buckingham Palace after a drive. The pistol, however, proved to be unloaded—an antique and useless or harmless weapon, with a flint lock which was broken, and in the barrel



a piece of greasy red rag. The wretched lad held a paper in one hand which was found to be some sort of petition on behalf of the Fenian prisoners. When he came up for trial a plea of insanity was put in on his behalf, but he did not seem to be insane in the sense of being irresponsible for his actions or incapable of understanding the penalty they involved, and he was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment and a whipping. We have hurried over many years for the purpose of completing this painful and ludicrous catalogue of the attempts made against the Queen. It will be seen that in not a single instance was there the slightest political significance to be attached to them. Even in our own softened and civilised time it sometimes happens that an attempt is made on the life of a sovereign which, however we may condemn and reprobate it on moral grounds, yet does seem to bear a distinct political meaning, and to show that there are fanatical minds still burning under some sense of national or personal wrong. But in the various attacks which were made on Queen Victoria nothing of the kind was even pretended. There was no opportunity for any vapouring about Brutus and Charlotte Corday. The impulse, where it was not that of sheer insanity, was of kin to the vulgar love of notoriety in certain minds which sets on those whom it pervades to mutilate noble works of art and scrawl their autographs on the marble of immortal monuments. There was a great deal of wisdom shown in not dealing too severely with most of these offences and in not treating them too much *au sérieux*. Prince

Albert himself said that 'the vindictive feeling of the common people would be a thousand times more dangerous than the madness of individuals.' There was not indeed the slightest danger at any time that the 'common people' of England could be wrought up to any sympathy with assassination ; nor was this what Prince Albert meant. But the Queen and her husband were yet new to power, and the people had not quite lost all memory of sovereigns who, well-meaning enough, had yet scarcely understood constitutional government, and there were wild rumours of reaction this way and revolution that way. It might have fomented a feeling of distrust and dissatisfaction if the people had seen any disposition on the part of those in authority to strain the criminal law for the sake of enforcing a death penalty against creatures like Oxford and Bean. The most alarming and unnerving of all dangers to a ruler is that of assassination. Even the best and most blameless sovereign is not wholly secure against it. The hand of Oxford might have killed the Queen. Perhaps, however, the best protection a sovereign can have is not to exaggerate the danger. There is no safety in mere severity of punishment. Where the attempt is serious and desperate, it is that of a fanaticism which holds its life in its hand, and is not to be deterred by fear of death. The tortures of Ravallac did not deter Damiens. The birch in the case of Bean and O'Connor may effectively discountenance enterprises which are born of the mountebank's and not the fanatic's spirit.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE OPIUM WAR.

THE Opium dispute with China was going on when the Queen came to the throne. The Opium War broke out soon after. On March 3, 1843, five huge waggons, each of them drawn by four horses, and the whole under escort of a detachment of the 60th Regiment, arrived in front of the Mint. An immense crowd followed the waggons. It was seen that they were filled with boxes ; and one of the boxes having been somewhat broken in its journey, the crowd were able to see that it was crammed full of odd-looking silver coins. The lookers-on were delighted, as well as amused, by the sight of this huge consignment of treasure ; and when it became known that the silver money was the first instalment of the China ransom, there were lusty cheers given as the waggons passed through the gates of the Mint. This was a payment on account of the war indemnity imposed on China. Nearly four millions and a half sterling was the sum of the indemnity, in addition to one million and a quarter which had already been paid by the Chinese authorities. Many readers may remember that for some time 'China money' was regularly set down as an item in the revenues of each year with which

the Chancellor of the Exchequer had to deal. The China War of which this money was the spoil was not perhaps an event of which the nation was entitled to be very proud. It was the precursor of other wars ; the policy on which it was conducted has never since ceased altogether to be a question of more or less excited controversy ; but it may safely be asserted that if the same events were to occur in our day it would be hardly possible to find a Ministry to originate a war, for which at the same time it must be owned that the vast majority of the people, of all politics and classes, were only too ready then to find excuse and even justification. The waggon-loads of silver conveyed into the Mint amid the cheers of the crowd were the spoils of the famous Opium War.

Reduced to plain words, the principle for which we fought in the China War was the right of Great Britain to force a peculiar trade upon a foreign people in spite of the protestations of the Government and all such public opinion as there was of the nation. Of course this was not the avowed motive of the war. Not often in history is the real and inspiring motive of a war proclaimed in so many words by those who carry it on. Not often, indeed, is it seen, naked and avowed, even in the minds of its promoters themselves. As the quarrel between this country and China went on, a great many minor and incidental subjects of dispute arose which for the moment put the one main and original question out of people's minds ; and in the course of these discussions it hap-

pened more than once that the Chinese authorities took some steps which put them decidedly in the wrong. Thus it is true enough that there were particular passages of the controversy when the English Government had all or nearly all of the right on their side so far as the immediate incident of the dispute was concerned; and when, if that had been the whole matter of quarrel, or if the quarrel had begun there, a patriotic minister might have been justified in thinking that the Chinese were determined to offend England and deserved humiliation. But no consideration of this kind can now hide from our eyes the fact that in the beginning and the very origin of the quarrel we were distinctly in the wrong. We asserted, or at least acted on the assertion of, a claim so unreasonable and even monstrous that it never could have been made upon any nation strong enough to render its assertion a matter of serious responsibility. The most important lessons a nation can learn from its own history are found in the exposure of its own errors. Historians have sometimes done more evil than court flatterers when they have gone about to glorify the errors of their own people, and to make wrong appear right, because an English Government talked the public opinion of the time into a confusion of principles.

The whole principle of Chinese civilisation, at the time when the Opium War broke out, was based on conditions which to any modern nation must seem erroneous and unreasonable. The Chinese governments and people desired to have no political rela-

tions or dealings whatever with any other State. They were not so obstinately ~~set~~ against private and commercial dealings ; but they would have no political intercourse with foreigners, and they would not even recognise the existence of foreign peoples as States. They were perfectly satisfied with themselves and their own systems. They were convinced that their own systems were not only wise but absolutely perfect. It is superfluous to say that this was in itself evidence of ignorance and self-conceit. A belief in the perfection of their own systems could only exist among a people who knew nothing of any other systems. But absurd as the idea must appear to us, yet the Chinese might have found a good deal to say for it. It was the result of a civilisation so ancient that the oldest events preserved in European history were but as yesterday in the comparison. Whatever its errors and defects, it was distinctly a civilisation. It was a system with a literature and laws and institutions of its own ; it was a coherent and harmonious social and political system which had on the whole worked tolerably well. It was not very unlike in its principles the kind of civilisation which at one time it was the whim of men of genius, like Rousseau and Diderot, to idealize and admire. The European, of whatever nation, may be said to like change, and to believe in its necessity. His instincts and his convictions alike tend this way. The sleepest of Europeans—the Neapolitan who lies with his feet in the water on the Chiaja ; the Spaniard, who smokes his cigar and sips his coffee as if life had

no active business whatever ; the *flâneur* of the Paris boulevards ; the beggar who lounged from cabin to cabin in Ireland a generation ago—all these, no matter how little inclined for change themselves, would be delighted to hear of travel and enterprise, and of new things and new discoveries. But to the Chinese of all Eastern races the very idea of travel and change was something repulsive and odious. As the thought of having to go a day unwashed would be to the educated Englishman of our age, or as the edge of a precipice is to a nervous man, so was the idea of innovation to the Chinese of that time. The ordinary Oriental dreads and detests change ; but the Chinese at that time went as far beyond the ordinary Oriental as the latter goes beyond an average Englishman. In the present day a considerable alteration has taken place in this respect. The Chinese have had innovation after innovation forced on them, until at last they have taken up with the new order of things, like people who feel that it is idle to resist their fate any longer. The emigration from China has been as remarkable as that from Ireland or Germany ; and the United States finds itself confronted with a question of the first magnitude when it asks itself what is to be the influence and operation of the descent of the Chinese populations along the Pacific slope. Japan has put on modern and European civilisation like a garment. Japan effected in a few years a revolution in the political constitution and the social habits of her people, and in their very way of looking at things, the like of which no other State ever accomplished in

a century. But nothing of all this was thought of at the time of the China War. The one thing which China asked of European civilisation and the thing called Modern Progress was to be let alone. China's prayer to Europe was that of Diogenes to Alexander — 'stand out of my sunshine.'

It was, as we have said, to political relationships rather than to private and commercial dealings with foreign peoples that the Chinese felt an unconquerable objection. They did not indeed like even private and commercial dealings with foreigners. They would much rather have lived without ever seeing the face of a foreigner. But they had put up with the private intrusion of foreigners and trade, and had had dealings with American traders, and with the East India Company. The charter and the exclusive rights of the East India Company expired in April 1834; the charter was renewed under different conditions, and the trade with China was thrown open. One of the great branches of the East India Company's business with China was the opium trade. When the trading privileges ceased this traffic was taken up briskly by private merchants, who bought of the Company the opium which they grew in India and sold it to the Chinese. The Chinese governments, and all teachers, moralists, and persons of education in China, had long desired to get rid of or put down this trade in opium. They considered it highly detrimental to the morals, the health and the prosperity of the people. Of late the destructive effects of opium have often been disputed, particularly in the House



of Commons. It has been said that it is not on the average nearly so unwholesome as the Chinese governments always thought, and that it does not do as much proportionate harm to China as the use of brandy, whisky, and gin does to England. It seems to this writer hardly possible to doubt that the use of opium is, on the whole, a curse to any nation; but, even if this were not so, the question between England and the Chinese governments would remain just the same. The Chinese governments may have taken exaggerated views of the evils of the opium trade; their motives in wishing to put it down may have been mixed with considerations of interest as much political as philanthropic. Lord Palmerston insisted that the Chinese Government were not sincere in their professed objection on moral grounds to the traffic. If they were sincere, he asked, why did they not prevent the growth of the poppy in China? It was, he tersely put it, an 'exportation of bullion question, an agricultural protection question;' it was a question of the poppy interest in China, and of the economists who wished to prevent the exportation of the precious metals. It is curious that such arguments as this could have weighed with anyone for a moment. It was no business of ours to ask ourselves whether the Chinese Government were perfectly sincere in their professions of a lofty morality, or whether they, unlike all other governments that have ever been known, were influenced by one sole motive in the making of their regulations. All that had nothing to do with the question. States are not at

liberty to help the subjects of other States to break the laws of their own governments. Especially when these laws even profess to concern questions of morals, is it the duty of foreign States not to interfere with the regulations which a government considers it necessary to impose for the protection of its people. All traffic in opium was strictly forbidden by the governments and laws of China. Yet our English traders carried on a brisk and profitable trade in the forbidden article. Nor was this merely an ordinary smuggling, or a business akin to that of the blockade running during the American civil war. The arrangements with the Chinese Government allowed the existence of all establishments and machinery for carrying on a general trade at Canton and Macao ; and under cover of these arrangements the opium traders set up their regular head-quarters in these towns.

Let us find an illustration intelligible to readers of the present day to show how unjustifiable was this practice. The State of Maine, as everyone knows, prohibits the common sale of spirituous liquors. Let us suppose that several companies of English merchants were formed in Portland and Augusta, and the other towns of Maine, for the purpose of brewing beer and distilling whisky, and selling both to the public of Maine in defiance of the State laws. Let us further suppose that when the authorities of Maine proceeded to put the State laws in force against these intruders, our Government here took up the cause of the whisky sellers, and sent an

ironclad fleet to Portland to compel the people of Maine to put up with them. It seems impossible to think of any English Government taking such a course as this ; or of the English public enduring it for one moment. In the case of such a nation as the United States, nothing of the kind would be possible. The serious responsibilities of any such undertaking would make even the most thoughtless minister pause and would give the public in general some time to think the matter over ; and before any freak of the kind could be attempted the conscience of the nation would be aroused, and the unjust policy would have to be abandoned. But in dealing with China the Ministry never seems to have thought the right or wrong of the question a matter worthy of any consideration. The controversy was entered upon with as light a heart as a modern war of still graver moment. The people in general knew nothing about the matter until it had gone so far that the original point of dispute was almost out of sight, and it seemed as if the safety of English subjects and the honour of England were compromised in some way by the high-handed proceedings of the Chinese Government.

The English Government appointed superintendents to manage our commercial dealings with China. Unluckily these superintendents were invested with a sort of political or diplomatic character, and thus from the first became objectionable to the Chinese authorities. One of the first of these superintendents acted in disregard of the express instructions of his

own Government. He was told that he must not pass the entrance of the Canton river in a vessel of war, as the Chinese authorities always made a marked distinction between ships of war and merchant vessels in regard to the freedom of intercourse. Misunderstandings occurred at every new step of negotiation. These misunderstandings were natural. Our people knew hardly anything about the Chinese. The limitation of our means of communication with them made this ignorance inevitable, but certainly did not excuse our acting as if we were in possession of the fullest and most accurate information. The manner in which some of our official instructors went on was well illustrated by a sentence in the speech of Sir James Graham, during the debate on the whole subject in the House of Commons in April, 1840. It was, Sir James Graham said, as if a foreigner who was occasionally permitted to anchor at the Nore, and at times to land at Wapping, being placed in close confinement during his continuance there, were to pronounce a deliberate opinion upon the resources, the genius, and the character of the British Empire.

Our representatives were generally disposed to be unyielding ; and not only that, but to see deliberate offence in every Chinese usage or ceremony which the authorities endeavoured to impose on them. On the other hand, it is clear that the Chinese authorities thoroughly detested them and their mission, and all about them, and often made or countenanced delays that were unnecessary, and interferences which were disagreeable and offensive. The Chinese believed

from the first that the superintendents were there merely to protect the opium trade, and to force on China political relations with the West. Practically this was the effect of their presence. The superintendents took no steps to aid the Chinese authorities in stopping the hated trade. The British traders naturally enough thought that the British Government were determined to protect them in carrying it on. Indeed the superintendents themselves might well have had the same conviction. The Government at home allowed Captain Elliott, the chief superintendent, to make appeal after appeal for instructions without paying the slightest attention to him. Captain Elliott saw that the opium traders were growing more and more reckless and audacious; that they were thrusting their trade under the very eyes of the Chinese authorities. He also saw, as everyone on the spot must have seen, that the authorities, who had been somewhat apathetic for a long time, were now at last determined to go any lengths to put down the traffic. At length the English Government announced to Captain Elliott the decision which they ought to have made known months, not to say years before, that 'her Majesty's Government could not interfere for the purpose of enabling British subjects to violate the laws of the country with which they trade;' and that 'any loss therefore which such persons may suffer in consequence of the more effectual execution of the Chinese laws on this subject must be borne by the parties who have brought that loss on themselves by their own acts.' This very wise

and proper resolve 'came, however, too late. The British traders had been allowed to go on for a long time under the full conviction that the protection of the English Government was behind them and wholly at their service. Captain Elliott himself seems to have now believed that the announcement of his superiors was but a graceful diplomatic figure of speech. When the Chinese authorities actually proceeded to insist on the forfeiture of an immense quantity of the opium in the hand of British traders, and took other harsh, but certainly not unnatural measures to extinguish the traffic, Captain Elliott sent to the Governor of India a request for as many ships of war as could be spared for the protection of the life and property of Englishmen in China. Before long British ships arrived; and the two countries were at war.

It is not necessary to describe the successive steps by which the war came on. It was inevitable from the moment that the English superintendent identified himself with the protection of the opium trade. The English believed that the Chinese authorities were determined on war, and only waiting for a convenient moment to make a treacherous beginning. The Chinese were convinced that from the first we had meant nothing but war. Such a condition of feeling on both sides would probably have made war unavoidable, even in the case of two nations who had far much better ways of understanding each other than the English and Chinese. It is not surprising if the English people at home knew little of the original causes of the controversy. All that presented

itself to their mind was the fact that Englishmen were in danger in a foreign country ; that they were harshly treated and recklessly imprisoned ; that their lives were in jeopardy, and that the flag of England was insulted. There was a general notion too, that the Chinese were a barbarous and a ridiculous people who had no alphabet, and thought themselves much better than any other people, even the English, and that, on the whole, it would be a good thing to take the conceit out of them. Those who remember what the common feeling of ordinary society was at the time, will admit that it did not reach a much loftier level than this. The matter was, however, taken up more seriously in Parliament.

The policy of the Government was challenged in the House of Commons, but with results of more importance to the existing composition of the English Cabinet than to the relations between this country and China. Sir James Graham moved a resolution condemning the policy of ministers, for having by its uncertainty and other errors brought about the war, which, however, he did not then think it possible to avoid. A debate which continued for three days took place. It was marked by the same curious mixture of parties which we have seen in debates on China questions in days nearer to the present. The defence of the Government was opened by Mr. Macaulay, who had been elected for Edinburgh and appointed Secretary at War. The defence consisted chiefly in the argument that we could not have put the trade in opium down, no matter how earnest

we had been, and that it was not necessary or possible to keep on issuing frequent instructions to agents so far away as our representatives in China. Mr. Macaulay actually drew from our experience in India an argument in support of his position. We cannot govern India from London, he insisted ; we must, for the most part, govern India in India. One can imagine how Macaulay would in one of his essays have torn into pieces such an argument coming from any advocate of a policy opposed to his own. The reply, indeed, is almost too obvious to need any exposition. In India the complete materials of administration were in existence. There was a Governor-General, there were councillors, there was an army. The men best qualified to rule the country were there, provided with all the appliances and forces of rule. In China we had an agent with a vague and anomalous office dropped down in the middle of a hostile people, possessed neither of recognised authority nor of power to enforce its recognition. It was probably true enough that we could not have put down the opium trade ; that even with all the assistance of the Chinese Government we could have done no more than to drive it from one port in order to see it make its appearance at another. But what we ought to have done is, therefore, only the more clear. We ought to have announced from the first, and in the firmest tone, that we would have nothing to do with the trade ; that we would not protect it ; and we ought to have held to this determination. As it was, we allowed our traders to remain under the impres-



sion that we were willing to support them, until it was too late to undeceive them with any profit to their safety or our credit. The Chinese authorities acted after a while with a high-handed disregard of fairness, and of anything like what we should call the responsibility of law ; but it is evident that they believed they were themselves the objects of lawless intrusion and enterprise. There were on the part of the Government great efforts made to represent the motion as an attempt to prevent the Ministry from exacting satisfaction from the Chinese Government, and from protecting the lives and interests of Englishmen in China. But it is unfortunately only too often the duty of statesmen to recognise the necessity of carrying on a war, even while they are of opinion that they whose mismanagement brought about the war deserve condemnation. When Englishmen are being imprisoned and murdered, the innocent just as well as the guilty, in a foreign country—when, in short, war is actually going on—it is not possible for English statesmen in opposition to say ‘ We will not allow England to strike a blow in defence of our fellow-countrymen and our flag, because we are of opinion that better judgment on the part of our Government would have spared us the beginning of such a war.’ There was really no inconsistency in recognising the necessity of carrying on the war, and at the same time censuring the Ministry who had allowed the necessity to be forced upon us. Sir Robert Peel quoted with great effect, during the debate, the example of Fox, who declared

his readiness to give every help to the prosecution of a war which the very same day he proposed to censure the Ministry for having brought upon the country. With all their efforts, the ministers were only able to command a majority of nine votes as the result of the three days' debate.

The war, however, went on. It was easy work enough so far as England was concerned. It was on our side nothing but a succession of cheap victories. The Chinese fought very bravely in a great many instances ; and they showed still more often a Spartan-like resolve not to survive defeat. When one of the Chinese cities was taken by Sir Hugh Gough, the Tartar general went into his house as soon as he saw that all was lost, made his servants set fire to the building, and calmly sat in his chair until he was burned to death. One of the English officers writes of the same attack, that it was impossible to compute the loss of the Chinese, 'for when they found they could stand no longer against us, they cut the throats of their wives and children, or drove them into wells or ponds, and then destroyed themselves. In many houses there were from eight to twelve dead bodies, and I myself saw a dozen women and children drowning themselves in a small pond, the day after the fight.' We quickly captured the island of Chusan, on the east coast of China ; a part of our squadron went up the Peiho river to threaten the capital ; negotiations were opened, and the preliminaries of a treaty were made out, to which, however, neither the English Government nor the Chinese would agree,

and the war was reopened. Chusan was again taken by us ; Ningpo, a large city a few miles in on the mainland, fell into our hands ; Amoy, farther south, was captured ; our troops were before Nankin, when the Chinese Government at last saw how futile was the idea of resisting our arms. Their women or their children might just as well have attempted to encounter our soldiers. With all the bravery which the Chinese often displayed, there was something pitiful, pathetic, ludicrous, in the simple and child-like attempts which they made to carry on war against us. They made peace at last on any terms we chose to ask. We asked in the first instance the cession in perpetuity to us of the island of Hong-Kong. Of course we got it. Then we asked that five ports, Canton, Amoy, Foo-Chow-Foo, Ningpo, and Shanghai, should be thrown open to British traders, and that consuls should be established there. Needless to say that this too was conceded. Then it was agreed that the indemnity already mentioned should be paid by the Chinese Government—some four millions and a half sterling, in addition to one million and a quarter as compensation for the destroyed opium. It was also stipulated that correspondence between officials of the two Governments was thenceforth to be carried on upon equal terms. The war was over for the present, and the thanks of both Houses of Parliament were voted to the fleet and army engaged in the operations. The Duke of Wellington moved the vote of thanks in the House of Lords. He could hardly help, one would think,

forming in his mind as he spoke an occasional contrast between the services which he asked the House to honour, and the sort of warfare which it had been his glorious duty to engage in so long. The Duke of Wellington was a simple-minded man with little sense of humour. He did not probably perceive himself the irony that others might have seen in the fact that the conqueror of Napoleon, the victor in years of warfare against soldiers unsurpassed in history, should have had to move a vote of thanks to the fleet and army which triumphed over the unarmed, helpless, childlike Chinese.

The whole chapter of history ended, not inappropriately perhaps, with a rather pitiful dispute between the English Government and the English traders about the amount of compensation to which the latter laid claim for their destroyed opium. The Government were in something of a difficulty; for they had formally announced that they were resolved to let the traders abide by any loss which their violation of the laws of China might bring upon them. But, on the other hand, they had identified themselves by the war with the cause of the traders; and one of the conditions of peace had been the compensation for the opium. The traders insisted that the amount given for this purpose by the Chinese Government did not nearly meet their losses. The English Government, on the other hand, would not admit that they were bound in any way further to make good the losses of the merchants. The traders demanded to be compensated according to the price of opium at the time the seizure

was made ; a demand which, if we admit any claim at all, seems only fair and reasonable. The Government had clearly undertaken their cause in the end, and were hardly in a position, either logical or dignified, when they afterwards chose to say, ' Yes, we admit that we did undertake to get you redress, but we do not think now that we are bound to give you full redress.' At last, the matter was compromised ; the merchants had to take what they could get, something considerably below their demand, and give in return to the Government an immediate acquittance in full. It is hard to get up any feeling of sympathy with the traders who lost on such a speculation. It is hard to feel any regret even if the Government which had done so much for them in the war treated them so shabbily when the war was over ; but that they were treated shabbily in the final settlement seems to us to allow of no doubt.

The Chinese war then was over for the time. But as the children say that snow brings more snow, so did that war with China bring other wars to follow it.

## CHAPTER IX.

## DECLINE AND FALL OF THE WHIG MINISTRY.

THE Melbourne Ministry kept going from bad to worse. There was a great stirring in the country all around them, which made their feebleness the more conspicuous. We sometimes read in history a defence of some particular sovereign whom common opinion cries down, the defence being a reference to the number of excellent measures that were set in motion during his reign. If we were to judge of the Melbourne Ministry on the same principle, it might seem indeed as if their career was one of extreme activity and fruitfulness. Reforms were astir in almost every direction. Inquiries into the condition of our poor and our labouring classes were, to use a cant phrase of the time, the order of the day. The foundation of the colony of New Zealand was laid with a philosophical deliberation and thoughtfulness which might have reminded one of Locke and the Constitution of the Carolinas. Some of the first comprehensive and practical measures to mitigate the rigour and to correct the indiscriminateness of the death punishment were taken during this period. One of the first legislative enactments which fairly acknowledged the difference between an English wife and a purchased

slave, so far as the despotic power of the master was concerned, belongs to the same time. This was the Custody of Infants Bill, the object of which was to obtain for mothers of irreproachable conduct who through no fault of theirs were living apart from their husbands, occasional access to their children, with the permission and under the control of the Equity Judges. It is curious to notice how long and how fiercely this modest measure of recognition for what may almost be called the natural rights of a wife and a mother was disputed in Parliament, or at least in the House of Lords.

It is curious too to notice what a clamour was raised over the small contribution to the cause of national education which was made by the Melbourne Government. In 1834 the first grant of public money for the purposes of elementary education was made by Parliament. The sum granted was twenty thousand pounds, and the same grant was made every year until 1839. Then Lord John Russell asked for an increase of ten thousand pounds, and proposed a change in the manner of appropriating the money. Up to that time the grant had been distributed through the National School Society, a body in direct connection with the Church of England, and the British and Foreign School Association, which admitted children of all Christian denominations without imposing on them sectarian teaching. The money was dispensed by the Lords of the Treasury, who gave aid to applicants in proportion to the size and cost of the school buildings and the number of children who attended

them. Naturally the result of such an arrangement was, that the districts which needed help the most got it the least. If a place was so poor as not to be able to do anything for itself, the Lords of the Treasury would do nothing for it. Naturally too the rich and powerful Church of England secured the greater part of the grant for itself. There was no inspection of the schools; no reports were made to Parliament as to the manner in which the system worked; no steps were taken to find out if the teachers were qualified or the teaching was good. 'The statistics of the schools,' says a writer in the 'Edinburgh Review,' 'were alone considered : the size of the schoolroom, the cost of the building, and the number of scholars.' In 1839 Lord John Russell proposed to increase the grant, and an Order in Council transferred its distribution to a Committee of the Privy Council composed of the president and not more than five members. Lord John Russell also proposed the appointment of inspectors, the founding of a model school for the training of teachers, and the establishment of infant schools. The model school and the infant schools were to be practically unsectarian. The Committee of the Privy Council were to be allowed to depart from the principle of proportioning their grants to the amount of local contribution, to establish in poor and crowded places schools not necessarily connected with either of the two educational societies, and to extend their aid even to schools where the Roman Catholic version of the Bible was read. The proposals of the Government were fiercely opposed in both Houses of



Parliament. The most various and fantastic forms of bigotry combined against them. The application of public money, and especially through the hands of the Committee of Privy Council, to any schools not under the control and authority of the Church of England was denounced as a State recognition of popery and heresy. Scarcely less marvellous to us now are the speeches of those who promoted than of those who opposed the scheme. Lord John Russell himself, who was much in advance of the common opinion of those among whom he moved, pleaded for the principles of his measure in a tone rather of apology than of actual vindication. He did not venture to oppose point blank the claim of those who insisted that it was part of the sacred right of the Established Church to have the teaching all done in her own way or to allow no teaching at all.

The Government did not get all they sought for. They had a fierce fight for their grant, and an amendment moved by Lord Stanley, to the effect that her Majesty be requested to revoke the Order in Council appointing the Committee on Education, was only negatived by a majority of two votes—275 to 273. In the Lords, to which the struggle was transferred, the Archbishop of Canterbury actually moved and carried by a large majority an address to the Queen praying her to revoke the Order in Council. The Queen replied firmly that the funds voted by Parliament would be found to be laid out in strict accordance with constitutional usage, the rights of conscience, and the safety of the Established Church,

and so dismissed the question. The Government therefore succeeded in establishing their Committee of Council on Education, the institution by which our system of public instruction has been managed ever since. The Ministry on the whole showed to advantage in this struggle. They took up a principle and they stood by it. If, as we have said, the speeches made by the promoters of the scheme seem amazing to any intelligent person of our time because of the feeble, apologetic, and almost craven tone in which they assert the claims of a system of national education, yet it must be admitted that the principle was accepted by the Government at some risk, and that it was not shabbily deserted in the face of hostile pressure. It is worth noticing that while the increased grant and the principles on which it was to be distributed were opposed by such men as Sir Robert Peel, Lord Stanley, Mr. Gladstone, and Mr. Disraeli, it had the support of Mr. O'Connell and of Mr. Smith O'Brien. Both these Irish leaders only regretted that the grant was not very much larger, and that it was not appropriated on a more liberal principle. O'Connell was the recognised leader of the Irish Catholics and nationalists; Smith O'Brien was an aristocratic Protestant. With all the weakness of the Whig Ministry, their term of office must at least be remarkable for the new departure it took in the matter of National Education. The appointment of the Committee of Council marks an epoch.

Indeed the history of that time seems full of Reform projects. The Parliamentary annals contain

the names of various measures of social and political improvement which might in themselves, it would seem, bear witness to the most unsleeping activity on the part of any Ministry. Measures for general registration ; for the reduction of the stamp duty on newspapers, and of the duty on paper ; for the improvement of the gaol system ; for the spread of vaccination ; for the regulation of the labour of children ; for the prohibition of the employment of any child or young person under twenty-one in the cleaning of chimneys by climbing ; for the suppression of the punishment of the pillory ; efforts to relieve the Jews from civil disabilities—these are but a few of the many projects of social and political reform that occupied the attention of that busy period which somehow appears nevertheless to have been so sleepy and do-nothing. How does it come about that we can regard the Ministry in whose time all these things were done or attempted as exhausted and worthless ?

One answer is plain. The reforming energy was in the time, and not in the Ministry. In every instance public opinion went far ahead of the inclinations of her Majesty's ministers. There was a just and general conviction that if the Government were left to themselves they would do nothing. When they were driven into any course of improvement they usually did all they could to minimise the amount of reform to be effected. Whatever they undertook they seemed to undertake reluctantly, and as if only with the object of preventing other people

from having anything to do with it. Naturally, therefore, they got little or no thanks for any good they might have done. When they brought in a measure to abolish in various cases the punishment of death, they fell so far behind public opinion and the inclinations of the Commission that had for eight years been inquiring into the state of our criminal law, that their bill only passed by very narrow majorities, and impressed many ardent reformers as if it were meant rather to withhold than to advance a genuine reform. In truth it was a period of enthusiasm and of growth, and the Ministry did not understand this. Lord Melbourne seems to have found it hard to persuade himself that there was any real anxiety in the mind of anyone to do anything in particular. He had apparently got into his mind the conviction that the only sensible thing the people of England could do was to keep up the Melbourne Ministry, and that being a sensible people they would naturally do this. He had grown into something like the condition of a pampered old hall-porter, who dozing in his chair begins to look on it as an act of rudeness if any visitor to his master presumes to knock at the door and so disturb him from his comfortable rest.

Anyone who doubts that it was really a time of enthusiasm in these countries has only to glance at its history. The Church of England and the Church of Scotland were alike convulsed by movements which were the offspring of a genuine and irresistible enthusiasm—enthusiasm of that strong far-reaching kind

which makes epochs in the history of a church or a people. In Ireland Father Mathew, a pious and earnest friar, who had neither eloquence nor learning nor genius, but only enthusiasm and noble purpose, had stirred the hearts of the population in the cause of temperance as thoroughly as Peter the Hermit might have stirred the heart of a people to a crusade. Many of the efforts of social reform which are still periodically made among ourselves had their beginning then, and can scarcely be said to have made much advance from that day to this. In July, 1840, Mr. Hume moved in the House of Commons for an address to the Throne praying that the British Museum and the National Gallery might be opened to the public after Divine service on Sundays, 'at such hours as taverns, beershops and ginshops are legally open.' The motion was of course rejected; but it is worthy of mention now as an evidence of the point to which the spirit of social reform had advanced at a period when Lord Melbourne had seemingly made up his mind that reform had done enough for his generation, and that ministers might be allowed, at least during his time, to eat their meals in peace without being disturbed by the urgencies of restless Radicals or threatened with hostile majorities and Tory successes.

The Stockdale case was a disturbance of ministerial repose which at one time threatened to bring about a collision between the privileges of Parliament and the authority of the law courts. The Messrs. Hansard, the well-known Parliamentary printers, had published certain Parliamentary reports on prisons, in

which it happened that a book published by J. J. Stockdale was described as obscene and disgusting in the extreme. Stockdale proceeded against the Hansards for libel. The Hansards pleaded the authority of Parliament; but Lord Chief Justice Denman decided that the House of Commons was not Parliament, and had no authority to sanction the publication of libels on individuals. Out of this contradiction of authorities arose a long and often a very unseemly squabble. The House of Commons would not give up its privileges; the law courts would not admit its authority. Judgment was given by default against the Hansards in one of the many actions for libel which arose out of the affair, and the sheriffs of London were called on to seize and sell some of the Hansards' property to satisfy the demands of the plaintiff. The unhappy sheriffs were placed, as the homely old saying would describe it, between the devil and the deep sea. If they touched the property of the Hansards they were acting in contempt of the privilege of the House of Commons, and were liable to be committed to Newgate. If, on the other hand, they refused to carry out the orders of the Court of Queen's Bench, that court would certainly send them to prison for the refusal. The reality of their dilemma was in fact very soon proved. The amount of the damages was paid into the Sheriff's Court in order to avoid the scandal of a sale, but under protest; the House of Commons ordered the sheriffs to refund the money to the Hansards; the Court of Queen's Bench was moved for an order to direct the sheriffs to pay

it over to Stockdale. The sheriffs were finally committed to the custody of the sergeant-at-arms for contempt of the House of Commons. The Court of Queen's Bench served a writ of *habeas corpus* on the sergeant-at-arms calling on him to produce the sheriffs in court. The House directed the sergeant-at-arms to inform the court that he held the sheriffs in custody by order of the Commons. The sergeant-at-arms took the sheriffs to the Court of Queen's Bench, and made his statement there ; his explanation was declared reasonable and sufficient, and he marched his prisoners back again. A great deal of this ridiculous sort of thing went on which it is not now necessary to describe in any detail. The House of Commons, what with the arrest of the sheriffs and of agents acting on behalf of the pertinacious Stockdale, had on their hands batches of prisoners with whom they did not know in the least what to do ; the whole affair created immense popular excitement mingled with much ironical laughter. At last the House of Commons had recourse to legislation, and Lord John Russell brought in a bill on March 3, 1840, to afford summary protection to all persons employed in the publication of Parliamentary papers. The preamble of the measure declared that 'whereas it is essential to the due and effectual discharge of the functions and duties of Parliament that no obstruction should exist to the publication of the reports, papers, votes, or proceedings of either House as such House should deem fit,' it is to be lawful 'for any person or persons against whom any civil or criminal proceedings shall

be taken on account of such publication to bring before the court a certificate under the hand of the Lord Chancellor or the Speaker, stating that it was published by the authority of the House, and the proceedings should at once be stayed.' This bill was run quickly through both Houses—not without some opposition or at least murmur in the Upper House—and it became law on April 14. It settled the question satisfactorily enough, although it certainly did not define the relative rights of Parliament and the courts of law. No difficulty of the same kind has since arisen. The sheriffs and the other prisoners were discharged from custody after a while, and the public excitement went out in quiet laughter.

The question, however, was a very serious one; and it is significant that public opinion was almost entirely on the side of the law courts and the sheriffs. The Ministry must have so fallen in public favour as to bring the House of Commons into disrepute along with them, or such a sentiment could not have prevailed so widely out of doors. The public seemed to see nothing in the whole affair but a tyrannical House of Commons wielding illimitable powers against a few humble individuals, some of whom, the sheriffs for instance, had no share in the controversy except that imposed on them by official duty. Accordingly the sheriffs were the heroes of the hour, and were toasted and applauded all over the country. Assuredly it was an awkward position for the House of Commons to be placed in when it had to vindicate its privileges by committing to prison men who were



merely doing a duty which the law courts imposed on them. It would have been better probably if the Government had more firmly asserted the rights of the House of Commons at the beginning, and thus allowed the public to see the real question which the whole controversy involved. Nothing can be more clear now than the paramount importance of securing to each House of Parliament an absolute authority and freedom of publication. No evil that could possibly arise out of the misuse of such a power could be anything like that certain to come of a state of things which restricted by libel laws or otherwise the right of either House to publish whatever it thought proper for the public good. Not a single measure for the reform of any great grievance, from the abolition of slavery to the passing of the Factory Acts, but might have been obstructed, and perhaps even prevented, if the free exposure of existing evils were denied to the Houses of Parliament. In this country, Parliament only works through the power of public opinion. A social reform is not carried out simply by virtue of the decision of a cabinet that something ought to be done. The attention of the Legislature and of the public has to be called to the grievance again and again by speeches, resolutions, debates and divisions, before there is any chance of carrying a measure on the subject. When public opinion is ripe, and is strong enough to help the Government through with a reform in spite of prejudices and vested interests, then, and not till then, the reform is carried. But it would

be hardly possible to bring the matter up to this stage of growth if those who were interested in upholding a grievance had the power of worrying the publishers of the Parliamentary reports by legal proceedings in the earlier stages of the discussion. Nor would it be of any use to protect merely the freedom of debate in Parliament itself. It is not through debate, but through publication, that the public opinion of the country is reached. In truth, the poorer a man is, the weaker and the humbler, the greater need is there that he should call out for the full freedom of publication to be vested in the hands of Parliament. The factory child, the climbing boy, the apprentice under colonial systems of modified slavery, the seaman sent to sea in the rotten ship ; the woman clad in unwomanly rags who sings her ' Song of a Shirt ' ; the other woman almost literally unsexed in form, function and soul, who in her filthy trowsers of sacking dragged on all fours the coal trucks in the mines—these are the tyrants and the monopolists for whom we assert the privilege of Parliamentary publication.

The operations which took place about this time in Syria belong perhaps rather to the general history of the Ottoman Empire than to that of England. But they had so important a bearing on the relations between this country and France, and are so directly connected with subsequent events in which England bore a leading part, that it would be impossible to pass them over without some notice here. Mohammed Ali, Pasha of Egypt, the most powerful of all the

Sultan's feudatories, a man of iron will and great capacity both for war and administration, had made himself for a time master of Syria. By the aid of the warlike qualities of his adopted son, Ibrahim Pasha, he had defeated the armies of the Porte wherever he had encountered them. Mohammed's victories had for the time compelled the Porte to allow him to remain in power in Syria ; but the Sultan had long been preparing to try another effort for the reduction of his ambitious vassal. In 1839 the Sultan again declared war against Mohammed Ali. Ibrahim Pasha again obtained an overwhelming victory over the Turkish army. The energetic Sultan Mahmoud, a man not unworthy to cope with such an adversary as Mohammed Ali, died suddenly ; and immediately after his death the Capitan Pasha, or Lord High Admiral of the Ottoman fleet, went over to the Egyptians with all his vessels ; an act of almost unexampled treachery even in the history of the Ottoman Empire. It was evident that Turkey was not able to hold her own against the formidable Mohammed and his successful son ; and the policy of the Western powers of Europe, and of England especially, had long been to maintain the Ottoman Empire as a necessary part of the common State system. The policy of Russia was to keep up that empire as long as it suited her own purposes ; to take care that no other Power got anything out of Turkey ; and to prepare the way for such a partition of the spoils of Turkey as would satisfy Russian interests. Russia therefore was to be found now

defending Turkey, and now assailing her. The course taken by Russia was seemingly inconsistent; but it was only inconsistent as the course of a sailing ship may be which now tacks to this side and now to that, but has a clear object in view and a port to reach all the while. England was then and for a long time after steadily bent on preserving the Turkish Empire, and in a great measure as a rampart against the schemes and ambitions imputed to Russia herself. France was less firmly set on the maintenance of Turkey; and France, moreover, had got it into her mind that England had designs of her own on Egypt. Austria was disposed to go generally with England; Prussia was little more than a nominal sharer in the alliance that was now tinkered up. It is evident that such an alliance could not be very harmonious or direct in its action. It was, however, effective enough to prove too strong for the Pasha of Egypt. A fleet made up of English, Austrian and Turkish vessels bombarded Acre; an allied army drove the Egyptians from several of their strongholds. Ibrahim Pasha with all his courage and genius was not equal to the odds against which he now saw himself forced to contend. He had to succumb. No one could doubt that he and his father were incomparably better able to give good government and the chances of development to Syria than the Porte had ever been. But in this instance, as in others, the odious principle was upheld by England and her actual allies, that the Turkish Empire must be maintained at no matter what cost of suffering and degradation to its subject

populations. Mohammed Ali was deprived of all his Asiatic possessions; but was secured in his government of Egypt. A convention signed at London on July 15, 1840, arranged for the imposition of those terms on Mohammed Ali.

The convention was signed by the representatives of Great Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia, on the one part, and of the Ottoman Porte on the other. The name of France was not found there. France had drawn back from the alliance, and for some time seemed as if she were likely to take arms against it. M. Thiers was then her Prime Minister: he was a man of quick fancy, restless and ambitious temperament, and what we cannot help calling a vulgar spirit of national self-sufficiency—we are speaking now of the Thiers of 1840, not of the wise and capable statesman, tempered and tried by the fire of adversity, who reorganised France out of the ruin and welter of 1870. Thiers persuaded himself and the great majority of his countrymen that England was bent upon driving Mohammed Ali out of Egypt as well as out of Syria, and that her object was to obtain possession of Egypt for herself. For some months it seemed as if war were inevitable between England and France, although there was not in reality the slightest reason why the two States should quarrel. France was just as far away from any thought of a really disinterested foreign policy as England. England, on the other hand, had not the remotest idea of becoming the possessor of Egypt. Fortunately Louis Philippe and M. Guizot were both strongly in favour of peace;

M. Thiers resigned ; and M. Guizot became Minister for Foreign Affairs, and virtually head of the Government. Thiers defended his policy in the French Chamber in a scream of passionate and almost hysterical declamation. Again and again he declared that his mind had been made up to go to war if England did not at once give way and modify the terms of the convention of July. It cannot be doubted that Thiers carried with him much of the excited public feeling of France. But the King and M. Guizot were happily supported by the majority in and out of the Chambers ; and on July 13, 1841, the Treaty of London was signed, which provided for the settlement of the affairs of Egypt on the basis of the arrangement already made, and which contained moreover the stipulation, to be referred to more than once hereafter, by which the Sultan declared himself firmly resolved to maintain the ancient principle of his empire—that no foreign ship of war was to be admitted into the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, with the exception of light vessels for which a firman was granted.

The public of this country had taken but little interest in the controversy about Egypt, at least until it seemed likely to involve England in a war with France. Some of the episodes of the war were indeed looked upon with a certain satisfaction by people here at home. The bravery of Charles Napier, the hot-headed self-conceited commodore, was enthusiastically extolled, and his feats of successful audacity were glorified as though they had shown the

genius of a Nelson, or the clever resource of a Cochrane. Not many of Napier's admirers cared a rush about the merits of the quarrel between the Porte and the Pasha. Most of them would have been just as well pleased if Napier had been fighting for the Pasha and against the Porte ; not a few were utterly ignorant as to whether he was fighting for Porte or for Pasha. Those who claimed to be more enlightened had a sort of general idea that it was in some way essential to the safety and glory of England that whenever Turkey was in trouble we should at once become her champions, tame her rebels, and conquer her enemies. Unfounded as were the suspicions of Frenchmen about our designs upon Egypt, they can hardly be called very unreasonable. Even a very cool and impartial Frenchman might be led to the conclusion that free England would not without some direct purpose of her own have pledged herself to the cause of a base and a decaying despotism.

Steadily meanwhile did the Ministry go from bad to worse. They had greatly damaged their character by the manner in which they had again and again put up with defeat and consented to resume or retain office on any excuse or pretext. They were remarkably bad administrators ; their finances were wretchedly managed. In later times we have come to regard the Tories as especially weak in the matter of finance. A well-managed revenue and a comfortable surplus are generally looked upon as in some way or other the monopoly of a Liberal administration ; while lavish expenditure, deficit and increased taxation are

counted among the necessary accompaniments of a Tory Government. So nearly does public opinion on both sides go to accepting these conditions, that there are many Tories who take it rather as a matter of pride that their leaders are not mean economists, and who regard a free-handed expenditure of the national revenue as something peculiarly gentlemanlike and in keeping with the honourable traditions of a great country party. But this was not the idea which prevailed in the days of the Melbourne Ministry. Then the universal conviction was that the Whigs were incapable of managing the finances. The budget of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Baring, showed a deficiency of nearly two millions. This deficiency he proposed to meet in part by alteration in the sugar duties; but the House of Commons, after a long debate, rejected his proposals by a majority of thirty-six. It was then expected, of course, that ministers would resign; but they were not yet willing to accept the consequences of defeat. They thought they had another stone in their sling. Lord John Russell had previously given notice of his intention to move for a committee of the whole House to consider the state of legislation with regard to the trade in corn; and he now brought forward an announcement of his plan, which was to propose a fixed duty of eight shillings per quarter on wheat, and proportionately diminished rates on rye, barley and oats. Except for its effect on the fortunes of the Melbourne Ministry there is not the slightest importance to be attached to this proposal. It was an experiment in the direction of the



Free Traders who were just beginning to be powerful ; although they were not nearly strong enough yet to dictate the policy of a government. We shall have to tell the story of Free Trade hereafter ; this present incident is no part of the history of a great movement ; it is merely a small party dodge. It deceived no one. Lord Melbourne had always spoken with the uttermost contempt of the Free Trade agitation. With characteristic oaths, he had declared that of all the mad things he had ever heard suggested Free Trade was the maddest. Lord John Russell himself, although far more enlightened than the Prime Minister, had often condemned and sneered at the demand for Free Trade. The conversion of the ministers into the official advocates of a moderate fixed duty was all too sudden for the conscience, for the very stomach of the nation. Public opinion would not endure it. Nothing but harm came to the Whigs from the attempt. Instead of any new adherents or fresh sympathy being won for them by their proposal, people only asked, ' Will nothing then turn them out of office ? Will they never have done with trying new tricks to keep in place ? '

Sir Robert Peel took, in homely phrase, the bull by the horns. He proposed a direct vote of want of confidence—a resolution declaring that ministers did not possess the confidence of the House sufficiently to enable them to carry through the measures which they deemed of essential importance to the public welfare, and that their continuance in office under such circumstances was at variance with the spirit of

the Constitution. On June 4, 1841, the division was taken ; and the vote of no-confidence was carried by a majority of one. Even the Whigs could not stand this. Lord Melbourne at last began to think that things were looking serious. Parliament was dissolved, and the result of the general election was that the Tories were found to have a majority even greater than they themselves had anticipated. The moment the new Parliament was assembled amendments to the address were carried in both Houses in a sense hostile to the Government. Lord Melbourne and his colleagues had to resign, and Sir Robert Peel was entrusted with the task of forming an administration.

We have not much more to do with Lord Melbourne in this history. He merely drops out of it. Between his expulsion from office and his death, which took place in 1848, he did little or nothing to call for the notice of anyone. It was said at one time that his closing years were lonesome and melancholy ; but this has lately been denied, and indeed it is not likely that one who had such a genial temper and so many friends could have been left to the dreariness of a not self-sufficing solitude and to the bitterness of neglect. He was a generous and kindly man ; his personal character, although often assailed, was free of any serious reproach ; he was a failure in office, not so much from want of ability, as because he was a politician without convictions.

The Peel Ministry came into power with great hopes. It had Lord Lyndhurst for Lord Chancellor ; Sir James Graham for Home Secretary ; Lord Aber-

deen at the Foreign Office ; Lord Stanley was Colonial Secretary. The most remarkable man not in the Cabinet, soon to be one of the foremost statesmen in the country, was Mr. W. E. Gladstone. It is a fact of some significance in the history of the Peel administration, that the elections which brought the new Ministry into power brought Mr. Cobden for the first time into the House of Commons.

## CHAPTER X.

## MOVEMENTS IN THE CHURCHES.

WHILE Lord Melbourne and his Whig colleagues, still in office, were frittering away their popularity on the pleasant assumption that nobody was particularly in earnest about anything, the Vice-Chancellor and heads of houses held a meeting at Oxford, and passed a censure on the celebrated 'No. 90,' of 'Tracts for the Times.' The movement, of which some important tendencies were formally censured in the condemnation of this tract, was one of the most momentous that had stirred the Church of England since the Reformation. The author of the tract was Dr. John Henry Newman, and the principal ground for its censure by voices claiming authority was the principle it seemed to put forward—that a man might honestly subscribe all the articles and formularies of the English Church, while yet holding many of the doctrines of the Church of Rome, against which those articles were regarded as a necessary protest. The great movement which was thus brought into sudden question and publicity was in itself an offspring of the immense stirring of thought which the French Revolution called up, and which had its softened echo in the English Reform Bill. The centre of the

religious movement was to be found in the University of Oxford. When it is in the right, and when it is in the wrong, Oxford has always had more of the sentimental and of the poetic in its cast of thought than its rival or colleague of Cambridge. There were two influences then in operation over England, both of which alike aroused the alarm and the hostility of certain gifted and enthusiastic young Oxford men. One was the tendency to Rationalism drawn from the German theologians ; the other was the manner in which the connection of the Church with the State in England was beginning to operate to the disadvantage of the Church as a sacred institution and teacher. The Reform party everywhere were assailing the rights and property of the Church. In Ireland especially experiments were made which every practical man will now regard with approval, whether he be churchman or not, but which seemed to the devoted ecclesiast of Oxford to be fraught with danger to the freedom and influence of the Church. Out of the contemplation of these dangers sprang the desire to revive the authority of the Church ; to quicken her with a new vitality ; to give her once again that place as guide and inspirer of the national life which her ardent votaries believed to be hers by right, and to have been forfeited only by the carelessness of her authorities and their failure to fulfil the duties of her heaven-assigned mission.

No movement could well have had a purer source. None could have had more disinterested and high-minded promoters. It was borne in upon some

earnest unresting souls, like that of the sweet and saintly Keble—souls ‘without haste and without rest,’ like Goethe’s star—that the Church of England had higher duties and nobler claims than the business of preaching harmless sermons and the power of enriching bishops. Keble could not bear to think of the Church taking pleasure since all is well. He urged on some of the more vigorous and thoughtful minds around him, or rather he suggested it by his influence and his example, that they should reclaim for the Church the place which ought to be hers, as the true successor of the Apostles. He claimed for her that she, and she alone, was the real Catholic Church, and that Rome had wandered away from the right path, and foregone the glorious mission which she might have maintained. Among those who shared the spirit and purpose of Keble were Richard Hurrell Froude, the historian’s elder brother, who gave rich promise of a splendid career, but who died while still in comparative youth; Dr. Pusey, afterwards leader of the school of ecclesiasticism which bears his name; and, most eminent of all, Dr. Newman. Keble had taken part in the publication of a series of treatises called ‘Tracts for the Times,’ the object of which was to vindicate the real mission, as the writers believed, of the Church of England. This was the Tractarian movement which had such various and memorable results. Newman first started the project of the Tracts, and wrote the most remarkable of them. He had up to this time been distinguished as one of the most unsparing enemies of Rome. At

the same time he was, as he has himself said, 'fierce' against the 'instruments' and the 'manifestations' of 'the Liberal cause.' While he was at Algiers once a French vessel put in there, flying the tricolour; Newman would not even look at her. 'On my return, though forced to stop twenty-four hours at Paris, I kept indoors the whole time, and all that I saw of that beautiful city was what I saw from the diligence.' He had never had any manner of association with Roman Catholics; had in fact known singularly little of them. As Newman studied and wrote concerning the best way to restore the Church of England to her proper place in the national life, he kept the thought before him 'that there was something greater than the Established Church, and that that was the Church Catholic and Apostolic, set up from the beginning, of which she was but the local presence and the organ. She was nothing unless she was this. She must be dealt with strongly or she would be lost. There was need of a second Reformation.' At this time the idea of leaving the Church, never, Dr. Newman himself assures us, had crossed his imagination. He felt alarmed for the Church between German Rationalism and man-of-the-world liberalism. His fear was that the Church would sink to be the servile instrument of a State, and a Liberal State.

The abilities of Dr. Newman were hardly surpassed by any contemporary in any department of thought. His position and influence in Oxford were almost unique. There was in his intellectual tem-

perament a curious combination of the mystic and the logical. He was at once a poetic dreamer and a sophist—in the true and not the corrupt and ungenerous sense of the latter word. It had often been said of him and of another great Englishman, that a change in their early conditions and training would easily have made of Newman a Stuart Mill, and of Mill a Newman. England in our time has hardly had a greater master of argument and of English prose than Newman. He is one of the keenest of dialecticians ; and like Mill has the rare art that dissolves all the difficulties of the most abstruse or perplexed subject, and shows it bare and clear even to the least subtle of readers. His words dispel mists ; and whether they who listen agree or not, they cannot fail to understand. A penetrating poignant satirical humour is found in most of his writings ; an irony sometimes piercing suddenly through it like a darting pain. On the other hand, a generous vein of poetry and of pathos informs his style ; and there are many passages of his works in which he rises to the height of a genuine and noble eloquence.

In all the arts that make a great preacher or orator, Newman was strikingly deficient. His manner was constrained, ungraceful and even awkward ; his voice was thin and weak. His bearing was not at first impressive in any way. A gaunt emaciated figure, a sharp and eagle face, a cold meditative eye rather repelled than attracted those who saw him for the first time. Singularly devoid of affectation, Newman did not always conceal his intellectual scorn



of men who made loud pretence with inferior gifts, and the men must have been few indeed whose gifts were not inferior to his. Newman had no scorn for intellectual inferiority in itself; he despised it only when it gave itself airs. His influence while he was the vicar of St. Mary's at Oxford was profound. As Mr. Gladstone said of him in a recent speech, 'without ostentation or effort, but by simple excellence, he was continually drawing undergraduates more and more around him.' Mr. Gladstone in the same speech gave a description of Dr. Newman's pulpit style which is interesting: 'Dr. Newman's manner in the pulpit was one which, if you considered it in its separate parts, would lead you to arrive at very unsatisfactory conclusions. There was not very much change in the inflection of the voice; action there was none; his sermons were read and his eyes were always on his book; and all that you will say is against efficiency in preaching. Yes; but you take the man as a whole, and there was a stamp and a seal upon him, there was a solemn music and sweetness in his tone, there was a completeness in the figure, taken together with the tone and with the manner, which made even his delivery such as I have described it, and though exclusively with written sermons, singularly attractive.' The stamp and seal were indeed those which are impressed by genius, piety and earnestness. No opponent ever spoke of Newman but with admiration for his intellect and respect for his character. Dr. Newman had a younger brother, Francis W. Newman, who also possessed

remarkable ability and earnestness. He too was distinguished at Oxford, and seemed to have a great career there before him. But he was drawn one way by the wave of thought before his more famous brother had been drawn the other way. In 1830, the younger Newman found himself prevented by religious scruples from subscribing the Thirty-nine Articles for his master's degree. He left the university, and wandered for years in the East, endeavouring, not very successfully perhaps, to teach Christianity on its broadest base to Mahometans; and then he came back to England to take his place among the leaders of a certain school of free thought. Fate had dealt with those brothers as with the two friends in Richter's story: it 'seized their bleeding hearts, and flung them different ways.'

When Dr. Newman wrote the famous Tract 'No. 90,' for which he was censured, he bowed to the authority of his bishop if not to that of the heads of houses; and he discontinued the publication of such treatises. But he did not admit any change of opinion; and indeed soon after he edited a publication called 'The British Critic,' in which many of the principles held to be exclusively those of the Church of Rome were enthusiastically claimed for the English Church. Yet a little and the gradual working of Newman's mind became evident to all the world. The brightest and most penetrating intellect in the Church of England was withdrawn from her service, and Newman went over to the Church of Rome. His secession was described by Mr. Disraeli

a quarter of a century afterwards as having 'dealt a blow to the Church of England under which she still reels.' To this result had the inquiry conducted him which had led his friend Dr. Pusey merely to endeavour to incorporate some of the mysticism and the symbols of Rome with the ritual of the English Protestant Church; which had brought Keble only to seek a more liberal and truly Christian temper for the faith of the Protestant; and which had sent Francis Newman into Radicalism and Rationalism.

In truth, it is not difficult now to understand how the elder Newman's mind became drawn towards the ancient Church which won him at last. We can see from his own candid account of his early sentiments, how profoundly mystical was his intellectual nature, and how, long before he was conscious of any such tendency, he was drawn towards the very symbolisms of the Catholic Church. Pascal's early and unexplained mastery of mathematical problems which no one had taught him, is not more suggestive in its way than those early drawings of Catholic symbols and devices which, done in his childhood, Newman says, surprised and were inexplicable to him when he came on them in years long after. No place could be better fitted to encourage and develop this tendency to mysticism in a thoughtful mind, than Oxford with all its noble memories of scholars and of priests; with its picturesque and poetic surroundings, and its never-fading mediævalism. Newman lived in the past. His spirit was with mediæval England. His thoughts were of

a time when one Church took charge of the souls of a whole united devout people, and stood as the guide and authority appointed for them by Heaven. He thought of such a time until first he believed in it as a thing of the past, and next came to have faith in the possibility of its restoration as a thing of the present and the future. When once he had come to this point the rest followed, 'as by lot God wot.' No creature could for a moment suppose that that ideal Church was to be found in the English Establishment, submitted as it was to State-made doctrine, and to the decision of the Lord Chancellor, who might be an infidel or a free-liver. The question which Cardinal Manning tells us he asked himself years after at the time of the Gorham case, must often have presented itself to the mind of Newman. Suppose all the Bishops of the Church of England should decide unanimously on any question of doctrine, would anyone receive the decision as infallible? Of course not. Such is not the genius or the principle of the English Church. The Church of England has no pretension to be considered the infallible guide of the people in matters even of doctrine. Were she seriously to put forward any such pretension, it would be rejected with contempt by the common mind of the nation. We are not discussing questions of dogma, or the rival claims of churches here; we are merely pointing out that to a man with Newman's idea of a church, the Church of England could not long afford a home. That very logical tendency, which in the mind of Newman as of that of Pascal contended

for supremacy with the tendency to devotion and mysticism, only impelled him more rigorously on his way. He could not put up with compromises, and convince himself that he ought to be convinced. He dragged every compromise and every doctrine into the light, and insisted on knowing exactly what it amounted to and what it meant to say. The doctrines and compromises of his own Church did not satisfy him. There are minds which in this condition of bewilderment might have been content to find 'no footing so solid as doubt.' Newman had not a mind of that class. He could not believe in a world without a church, or a church without what he held to be inspiration; and accordingly he threw his whole soul, energy, genius and fame into the cause of the Church of Rome.

This, however, did not come all at once. We are anticipating by a few years the passing over of Dr. Newman, Cardinal Manning and others to the ancient Church. It is clear that Newman was not himself conscious for a long time of the manner in which he was being drawn, surely although not quickly, in the direction of Rome. He used to be accused at one time of having remained a conscious Roman Catholic in the English Church, labouring to make new converts. Apart from his own calm assurances, and from the singularly pure and candid nature of the man, there are reasons enough to render such a charge absurd. Indeed, that simple and childish conception of human nature which assumes that a man must always see the logical consequences of certain

admissions or inquiries beforehand, because all men can see them afterwards, is rather confusing and out of place when we are considering such a crisis of thought and feeling as that which took place in Oxford, and such men as those who were principally concerned in it. For the present it is enough to say that the object of that movement was to raise the Church of England from apathy, from dull, easy-going acquiescence, from the perfunctory discharge of formal duties, and to quicken her again with the spirit of a priesthood, to arouse her to the living work, spiritual and physical, of an ecclesiastical sovereignty. The impulse overshot itself in some cases and was misdirected in others. It proved a failure on the whole as to its definite aims; and it sometimes left behind it only the ashes of a barren symbolism. But in its source it was generous, beneficent and noble, and it is hard to believe that there has not been throughout the Church of England on the whole a higher spirit at work since the famous Oxford movement began.

Still greater was the practical importance, at least in defined results, of the movement which went on in Scotland about the same time. A fortnight before the decision of the heads of houses at Oxford on Dr. Newman's tract, Lord Aberdeen announced in the House of Lords that he did not see his way to do anything in particular with regard to the dissensions in the Church of Scotland. He had tried a measure, he said, the year before, and half the Church of Scotland liked it, and the other half denounced it,

and the Government opposed it ; and he, therefore, had nothing further to suggest in the matter. The perplexity of Lord Aberdeen only faintly typified the perplexity of the Ministry. Lord Melbourne was about the last man in the world likely to have any sympathy with the spirit which animated the Scottish Reformers, or any notion of how to get out of the difficulty which the whole question presented. Differing as they did in so many other points, there was one central resemblance between the movement in the Kirk of Scotland and that which was going on in the Church of England. In both cases alike the effort of the reforming party was to emancipate the Church from the control of the State in matters involving religious doctrine and duty. In Scotland was soon to be presented the spectacle of a great secession from an Established Church, not because the seceders objected to the principle of a Church, but because they held that the Establishment was not faithful enough to its mission as a Church. One of the seceders pithily explained the position of the controversy when he said that he and his fellows were leaving the Kirk of Scotland, not because she was too 'churchy,' but because she was not 'churchy' enough.

The case was briefly this. During the reign of Queen Anne an Act was passed which took from the Church courts in Scotland the free choice as to the appointment of pastors by subjecting the power of the presbytery to the control and interference of the law courts. Harley, Bolingbroke and Swift, not one

of whom cared a rush about the supposed sanctity of an ecclesiastical appointment, were the authors of this compromise, which was exactly of the kind that sensible men of the world everywhere might be supposed likely to accept and approve. In an immense number of Scotch parishes the minister was nominated by a lay patron; and if the presbytery found nothing to condemn in him as to 'life, literature and doctrine,' they were compelled to appoint him, however unwelcome he might be to the parishioners. Now it is obvious that a man might have a blameless character, sound religious views, and an excellent education, and nevertheless be totally unfitted to undertake the charge of a Scottish parish. The Southwark congregation who appreciate and delight in the ministrations of Mr. Spurgeon might very well be excused if they objected to having a perfectly moral Charles Honeyman, even though his religious opinions were identical with those of their favourite, forced upon them at the will of some aristocratic lay patron. The effect of the power conferred on the law courts and the patron was simply in a great number of cases to send families away from the Church of Scotland and into voluntarism. The Scotch people are above all others impatient of any attempt to force on them the services of unacceptable ministers. Men clung to the National Church as long as it was national—that is, as long as it represented and protected the sacred claims of a deeply religious people. Dissent, or rather voluntarism, began to make a progress in Scotland that alarmed



thoughtful churchmen. To get over the difficulty the General Assembly, the highest ecclesiastical court in Scotland, and likewise a sort of Church Parliament, declared that a veto on the nomination of the pastor should be exercised by the congregation, in accordance with a fundamental law of the Church that no pastor should be intruded on any congregation contrary to the will of the people. The Veto Act, as this declaration was called, worked well enough for a short time, and the highest legal authorities declared it not incompatible with the Act of Queen Anne. But it diminished far too seriously the power of the lay patron to be accepted without a struggle. In the celebrated Auchterarder case the patron won a victory over the Church in the courts of law, for having presented a minister whose appointment was vetoed by the congregation; he obtained an order from the civil courts deciding that the presbytery must take him on trial, in obedience with the Act of Queen Anne, as he was qualified by life, literature and doctrine. This question, however, was easily settled by the General Assembly of the Church. They left to the patron's nominee his stipend and his house, and took no further notice of him. They did not recognise him as one of their pastors, but he might have, if he would, the manse and the money which the civil courts had declared to be his. They merely appealed to the Legislature to do something which might make the civil law in harmony with the principles of the Church. A more serious question, however, presently arose. This was the famous

Strathbogie case, which brought the authority of the Church and that of the State into irreconcilable conflict. A minister had been nominated in the parish of Marnoch who was so unacceptable to the congregation that 261 out of 300 heads of families objected to his appointment. The General Assembly directed the presbytery of Strathbogie, in which the parish lay, to reject the minister, Mr. Edwards. The presbytery had long been noted for its leaning towards the claims of the civil power, and it very reluctantly obeyed the command of the highest authority and ruling body of the Church. Another minister was appointed to the parish. Mr. Edwards fought the question out in the civil court and obtained an interdict against the new appointment, and a decision that the presbytery were bound to take himself on trial. Seven members constituting the majority of the presbytery determined, without consulting the General Assembly, to obey the civil power, and they admitted Mr. Edwards on trial. The seven were brought before the bar of the General Assembly, and by an overwhelming majority were condemned to be deposed from their places in the ministry. Their parishes were declared vacant. A more complete antagonism between Church and State is not possible to imagine. The Church expelled from its ministry seven men for having obeyed the command of the civil laws.

It was on the motion of Dr. Chalmers that the seven ministers were deposed. Dr. Chalmers became the leader of the movement which was destined

within two years from the time we are now surveying to cause the disruption of the ancient Kirk of Scotland. No man could be better fitted for the task of leadership in such a movement. He was beyond comparison the foremost man in the Scottish Church. He was the greatest pulpit orator in Scotland, or, indeed, in Great Britain. As a scientific writer, both on astronomy and on political economy, he had made a great mark. From having been in his earlier days the minister of an obscure Scottish village congregation, he had suddenly sprung into fame. He was the lion of any city which he happened to visit. If he preached in London, the church was crowded with the leaders of politics, science and fashion, eager to hear him. The effect he produced in England is all the more surprising seeing that he spoke in the broadest Scottish accent conceivable, and, as one admirer admits, mispronounced almost every word. We have already quoted what Mr. Gladstone said about the style of Dr. Newman; let us cite also what he says about Dr. Chalmers. 'I have heard,' said Mr. Gladstone, 'Dr. Chalmers preach and lecture. Being a man of Scotch blood, I am very much attached to Scotland, and like even the Scotch accent; but not the Scotch accent of Dr. Chalmers. Undoubtedly the accent of Dr. Chalmers in preaching and delivery was a considerable impediment to his success; but notwithstanding all that, it was overborne by the power of the man in preaching—overborne by his power, which melted into harmony with all the adjuncts and incidents of

the man as a whole, so much so, that although I would have said that the accent of Dr. Chalmers was distasteful, yet in Dr. Chalmers himself I would not have had it altered in the smallest degree.' Chalmers spoke with a massive eloquence in keeping with his powerful frame and his broad brow and his commanding presence. His speeches were a strenuous blending of argument and emotion. They appealed at once to the strong common sense and to the deep religious convictions of his Scottish audiences. His whole soul was in his work as a leader of religious movements. He cared little or nothing for any popularity or fame that he might have won. Some strong and characteristic words of his own have told us what he thought of passing renown. He called it 'a popularity which rifles home of its sweets; and by elevating a man above his fellows places him in a region of desolation, where he stands a conspicuous mark for the shafts of malice, envy and detraction; a popularity which, with its head among storms and its feet on the treacherous quicksands, has nothing to lull the agonies of its tottering existence but the Hosannahs of a drivelling generation.' There is no reason to doubt that these were Chalmers's genuine sentiments; and scarcely any man of his time had come into so sudden and great an endowment of popularity. The reader of to-day must not look for adequate illustration of the genius and the influence of Chalmers in his published works. These do indeed show him to have been a strong reasoner and a man of original mind. But they do not show the

Chalmers of Scottish controversy. That Chalmers must be studied through the traces, lying all around, of his influence upon the mind and the history of the Scottish people. The Free Church of Scotland is his monument. He did not make that Church. It was not the work of one man, or, strictly speaking, of one generation. It grew naturally out of the inevitable struggle between Church and State. But Chalmers did more than any other man to decide the moment and the manner of its coming into existence, and its success is his best monument.

For we may anticipate a little, in this instance as in that of the Oxford movement, and mention at once the fact that on May 18, 1843, some five hundred ministers of the Church of Scotland, under the leadership of Dr. Chalmers, seceded from the old Kirk and set about to form the Free Church. The Government of Sir Robert Peel had made a weak effort at compromise by legislative enactment, but had declined to introduce any legislation which should free the Kirk of Scotland from the control of the civil courts, and there was no course for those who held the views of Dr. Chalmers but to withdraw from the Church which admitted that claim of State control. Opinions may differ as to the necessity, the propriety of the secession—as to its effects upon the history and the character of the Scottish people since that time ; but there can be no difference of opinion as to the spirit of self-sacrifice in which the step was taken. Five hundred ministers on that memorable day went deliberately forth from

their positions of comfort and honour, from home and competence, to meet an uncertain and a perilous future, with perhaps poverty and failure to be the final result of their enterprise, and with misconstruction and misrepresentation to make the bitter bread of poverty more bitter still. In these pages we have nothing to do with the merits of religious controversies ; and it is no part of our concern to consider even the social and political effects produced upon Scotland by this great secession. But we need not withhold our admiration from the men who risked and suffered so much in the cause of what they believed to be their Church's true rights ; and we are bound to give this admiration as cordially to the poor and nameless ministers, the men of the rank and file, about whose doings history so little concerns herself, as to the leaders like Chalmers, who, whether they sought it or not, found fame shining on their path of self-sacrifice. The history of Scotland is illustrated by many great national deeds. No deed it tells of surpasses in dignity and in moral grandeur that secession—to cite the words of the protest—‘from an Establishment which we loved and prized, through interference with conscience, the dishonour done to Christ's crown, and the rejection of his sole and supreme authority as King in his Church.’

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE DISASTERS OF CABUL.

THE earliest days of the Peel Ministry fell upon trouble, not indeed at home, but abroad. At home the prospect still seemed bright. The birth of the Queen's eldest son was an event welcomed by national congratulation. There was still great distress in the agricultural districts ; but there was a general confidence that the financial genius of Peel would quickly find some way to make burdens light, and that the condition of things all over the country would begin to mend. It was a region far removed from the knowledge and the thoughts of most Englishmen that supplied the news now beginning to come into England day after day, and to thrill the country with the tale of one of the greatest disasters to English policy and English arms to be found in all the record of our dealings with the East. There are many still living who can recall with an impression as keen as though it belonged to yesterday the first accounts that reached this country of the surrender at Cabul, and the gradual extinction of the army that tried to make its retreat through the terrible Pass.

This grim chapter of history had been for some time in preparation. It may be said to open with the

reign itself. News travelled slowly then ; and it was quite in the ordinary course of things that some part of the empire might be torn with convulsion for months before London knew that the even and ordinary condition of things had been disturbed. In this instance, the rejoicings at the accession of the young Queen were still going on, when a series of events had begun in Central Asia destined to excite the profoundest emotion in England, and to exercise the most powerful influence upon our foreign policy down to the present hour. On September 20, 1837, Captain Alexander Burnes arrived at Cabul, the capital of the state of Cabul, in the north of Afghanistan, and the ancient capital of the Emperor Baber, whose tomb is on a hill outside the city. Burnes was a famous orientalist and traveller, the Burton or Burnaby of his day ; he had conducted an expedition into Central Asia ; had published his travels in Bokhara, and had been sent on a mission by the Indian Government, in whose service he was to study the navigation of the Indus. He was, it may be remarked, a member of the family of Robert Burns, the poet himself having changed the original spelling of the name which all the other members of the family retained. The object of the journey of Captain Burnes to Cabul in 1837 was in the first instance to enter into commercial relations with Dost Mahomed, then ruler of Cabul, and with other chiefs of the western regions. But events soon changed his business from a commercial into a political and diplomatic mission ; and his tragic fate would make his journey



memorable to Englishmen for ever, even if other events had not grown out of it which give it a place of more than personal importance in history.

The great region of Afghanistan, with its historical boundaries as varying and difficult to fix at certain times as those of the old Dukedom of Burgundy, has been called the land of transition between Eastern and Western Asia. All the great ways that lead from Persia to India pass through that region. There is a proverb which declares that no one can be king of Hindostan without first becoming lord of Cabul. The Afghans are the ruling nation, but among them had long been settled Hindoos, Arabs, Armenians, Abyssinians, and men of other races and religions. The Afghans are Mahometans of the Shunite sect, but they allowed Hindoos, Christians, and even the Persians, who are of the hated dissenting sect of the Shiites, to live among them and even to rise to high position and influence. The founder of the Afghan empire, Ahmed Shah, died in 1773. He had made an empire which stretched from Herat on the west to Sirhind on the east, and from the Oxus and Cashmere on the north, to the Arabian Sea and the mouths of the Indus on the south. The death of his son, Timur Shah, delivered the kingdom up to the hostile factions, intrigues, and quarrels of his sons; the leaders of a powerful tribe, the Barukzyes, took advantage of the events that arose out of this condition of things to dethrone the descendants of Ahmed Shah. When Captain Burnes visited Afghanistan in 1832, the only part of all their great inheritance

which yet remained with the descendants of Ahmed Shah was the principality of Herat. The remainder of Afghanistan was parcelled out between Dost Mahomed and his brothers. Dost Mahomed was a man of extraordinary ability and energy. He would probably have made a name as a soldier and a statesman anywhere. He had led a stormy youth, but had put away with maturity and responsibility the vices and follies of his earlier years. There seems no reason to doubt that although he was a usurper he was a sincere lover of his country, and on the whole a wise and just ruler. When Captain Burnes visited Dost Mahomed, he was received with every mark of friendship and favour. Dost Mahomed professed to be, and no doubt at one time was, a sincere friend of the English Government and people. There was, however, at that time a quarrel going on between the Shah of Persia and the Prince of Herat, the last enthroned representative, as has been already said, of the great family on whose fall Dost Mahomed and his brothers had mounted into power. So far as can now be judged, there does seem to have been serious and genuine ground of complaint on the part of Persia against the ruler of Herat. But it is probable too that the Persian Shah had been seeking for, and in any case would have found, a pretext for making war; and the strong impression at the time in England, and among the authorities in India, was that Persia herself was but a puppet in the hands of Russia. A glance at the map will show the meaning of this suspicion and the reasons which at once gave it plausi-

bility, and would have rendered it of grave importance. If Persia were merely the instrument of Russia, and if the troops of the Shah were only the advance guard of the Czar, then undoubtedly the attack on Herat might have been regarded as the first step of a great movement of Russia towards our Indian dominion.

There were other reasons, too, to give this suspicion some plausibility. Mysterious agents of Russia, officers in her service and others, began to show themselves in Central Asia at the time of Captain Burnes's visit to Dost Mahomed. Undoubtedly Russia did set herself for some reason to win the friendship and alliance of Dost Mahomed ; and Captain Burnes was for his part engaged in the same endeavour. All considerations of a merely commercial nature had long since been put away, and Burnes was freely and earnestly negotiating with Dost Mahomed for his alliance. Burnes always insisted that Dost Mahomed himself was sincerely anxious to become an ally of England, and that he offered more than once on his own free part to dismiss the Russian agents even without seeing them, if Burnes desired him to do so. But for some reason Burnes's superiors did not share his confidence. In Downing Street and in Simla the profoundest distrust of Dost Mahomed prevailed. It was again and again impressed on Burnes that he must regard Dost Mahomed as a treacherous enemy and as a man playing the part of Persia and of Russia. It is impossible now to estimate fairly all the reasons which may have justified

the English and the Indian Governments in this conviction. But we know that nothing in the policy afterwards followed out by the Indian authorities exhibited any of the judgment and wisdom that would warrant us in taking anything for granted on the mere faith of their dictum. The story of four years—almost to a day the extent of this sad chapter of English history—will be a tale of such misfortune, blunder and humiliation as the annals of England do not anywhere else present. Blunders which were indeed worse than crimes, and a principle of action which it is a crime in any rulers to sanction, brought things to such a pass with us that in a few years from the accession of the Queen we had in Afghanistan soldiers who were positively afraid to fight the enemy, and some English officials who were not ashamed to treat for the removal of our most formidable foes by purchased assassination. It is a good thing for us all to read in cold blood this chapter of our history. It will teach us how vain is a policy founded on evil and ignoble principles; how vain is the strength and courage of men when they have not leaders fit to command. It may teach us also not to be too severe in our criticism of other nations. The failure of the French invasion of Mexico under the Second Empire seems like glory when compared with the failure of our attempt to impose a hated sovereign on the Afghan people.

Captain Burnes then was placed in the painful difficulty of having to carry out a policy of which he entirely disapproved. He believed in Dost

Mahomed as a friend, and he was ordered to regard him as an enemy. It would have been better for the career and for the reputation of Burnes if he had simply declined to have anything to do with a course of action which seemed to him at once unjust and unwise. But Burnes was a young man, full of youth's energy and ambition. He thought he saw a career of distinction opening before him, and he was unwilling to close it abruptly by setting himself in obstinate opposition to his superiors. He was, besides, of a quick mercurial temperament, over which mood followed mood in rapid succession of change. A slight contradiction sometimes threw him into momentary despondency ; a gleam of hope elated him into the assurance that all was won. It is probable that after a while he may have persuaded himself to acquiesce in the judgment of his chiefs. On the other hand, Dost Mahomed was placed in a position of great difficulty and danger. He had to choose. He could not remain absolutely independent of all the disputants. If England would not support him, he must for his own safety find alliances elsewhere ; in Russian statecraft for example. He told Burnes of this again and again, and Burnes endeavoured without the slightest success to impress his superiors with his own views as to the reasonableness of Dost Mahomed's arguments. Runjeet Singh, the daring and successful adventurer who had annexed the whole province of Cashmere to his dominions, was the enemy of Dost Mahomed and the faithful ally

of England. Dost Mahomed thought the British Government could assist him in coming to terms with Runjeet Singh, and Burnes had assured him that the British Government would do all it could to establish satisfactory terms of peace between Afghanistan and the Punjaub, over which Runjeet Singh ruled. Burnes wrote from Cabul to say that Russia had made substantial offers to Dost Mahomed; Persia had been lavish in her biddings for his alliance; Bokhara and other states had not been backward; 'yet in all that has passed, or is daily transpiring, the chief of Cabul declares that he prefers the sympathy and friendly offices of the British to all these offers, however alluring they may seem, from Persia or from the Emperor; which places his good sense in a light more than prominent, and in my humble judgment proves that by an earlier attention to these countries we might have escaped the whole of these intrigues and held long since a stable influence in Cabul.' Burnes, however, was unable to impress his superiors with any belief, either in Dost Mahomed or in the policy which he himself advocated, and the result was that Lord Auckland, the Governor-General of India, at length resolved to treat Dost Mahomed as an enemy, and to drive him from Cabul. Lord Auckland, therefore, entered into a treaty with Runjeet Singh and Shah Soojah-ool-Moolk, the exiled representative of what we may call the legitimist rulers of Afghanistan, for the restoration of the latter to the throne of his ancestors, and for the destruction of the power of Dost Mahomed.

It ought to be a waste of time to enter into any argument in condemnation of such a policy in our days. Even if its results had not proved in this particular instance its most striking and exemplary condemnation, it is so grossly and flagrantly opposed to all the principles of our more modern statesmanship that no one among us ought now to need a warning against it. Dost Mahomed was the accepted, popular and successful ruler of Cabul. No matter what our quarrel with him, we had not the slightest right to make it an excuse for forcing on his people a ruler whom they had proved before, as they were soon to prove again, that they thoroughly detested. Perhaps the nearest parallel to our policy in this instance is to be found in the French invasion of Mexico, and the disastrous attempt to impose a foreign ruler on the Mexican people. Each experiment ended in utter failure, and in the miserable death of the unfortunate puppet prince who was put forward as the figure-head of the enterprise. But the French Emperor could at least have pleaded in his defence that Maximilian of Austria had not already been tried and rejected by the Mexican people. Our *protégé* had been tried and rejected. The French Emperor might have pleaded that he had actual and substantial wrongs to avenge. We had only problematical and possible dangers to guard against. In any case, as has been already said, the calamities entailed on French arms and counsels by the Mexican intervention read like a page of brilliant success when compared with the immediate result of our enterprise in Cabul. Before pass-

ing away from this part of the subject, it is necessary to mention the fact that among its many unfortunate incidents the campaign led to some peculiarly humiliating debates and some lamentable accusations in the House of Commons. Years after Burnes had been flung into his bloody grave, it was found that the English Government had presented to the House of Commons his despatches in so mutilated and altered a form, that Burnes was made to seem as if he actually approved and recommended the policy which he especially warned us to avoid. It is painful to have to record such a fact, but it is indispensable that it should be recorded. It would be vain to attempt to explain how the principles and the honour of English statesmanship fell for the hour under the demoralising influence which allowed such things to be thought legitimate. An Oriental atmosphere seemed to have gathered around our official leaders. In Afghanistan they were entering into secret and treacherous treaties ; in England they were garbling despatches. When years after Lord Palmerston was called upon to defend the policy which had thus dealt with the despatches of Alexander Burnes, he did not say that the documents were not garbled. He only contended that as the Government had determined not to act on the advice of Burnes, they were in no wise bound to publish those passages of his despatches in which he set forth assumptions which they believed to be unfounded, and advised a policy which they looked upon as mistaken. Such a defence is only to be read with wonder and pain. The



Government were not accused of suppressing passages which they believed rightly or wrongly to be worthless. The accusation was that by suppressing passages and sentences here and there, Burnes was made to appear as if he were actually recommending the policy against which he was at the time most earnestly protesting. Burnes was himself the first victim of the policy which he strove against, and which all England has since condemned. No severer word is needed to condemn the mutilation of his despatches than to say that he was actually made to stand before the country as responsible for having recommended that very policy. 'It should never be forgotten,' says Sir J. W. Kaye, the historian of the Afghan War, 'by those who would form a correct estimate of the character and career of Alexander Burnes, that both have been misrepresented in those collections of State papers which are supposed to furnish the best materials of history, but which are often in reality only one-sided compilations of garbled documents—counterfeits, which the ministerial stamp forces into currency, defrauding a present generation, and handing down to posterity a chain of dangerous lies.'

Meanwhile the Persian attack on Herat had practically failed, owing mainly to the skill and spirit of a young English officer, Eldred Pottinger, who was assisting the prince in his resistance to the troops of the Persian Shah. Lord Auckland, however, ordered the assemblage of a British force for service across the Indus, and issued a famous manifesto, dated from Simla, October 1, 1838, in which he set forth the

motives of his policy. The Governor-General stated that Dost Mahomed had made a sudden and unprovoked attack upon our ancient ally, Runjeet Singh, and that when the Persian army was besieging Herat Dost Mahomed was giving undisguised support to the designs of Persia. The chiefs of Candahar, the brothers of Dost Mahomed, had also, Lord Auckland declared, given in their adherence to the plans of Persia. Great Britain regarded the advance of Persian arms in Afghanistan as an act of hostility towards herself. The Governor-General had, therefore, resolved to support the claims of the Shah Soojah-ool-Moolk, whose dominions had been usurped by the existing rulers of Cabul, and who had found an honourable asylum in British territory; and 'whose popularity throughout Afghanistan'—Lord Auckland wrote in words that must afterwards have read like the keenest and cruelest satire upon his policy—'had been proved to his Lordship by the strong and unanimous testimony of the best authorities.' This popular sovereign, this favourite of his people, was at the time living in exile, without the faintest hope of ever again being restored to his dominions. We pulled the poor man out of his obscurity, told him that his people were yearning for him, and that we would set him on his throne once more. We entered for the purpose into the tripartite treaty already mentioned. Mr. (afterwards Sir W. H.) Macnaghten, Secretary to the Government of India, was appointed to be envoy and minister at the court of Shah Soojah; and Sir Alexander Burnes

(who had been recalled from the court of Dost Mahomed and rewarded with a title for giving the advice which his superiors thought absurd) was deputed to act under his direction. It is only right to say that the policy of Lord Auckland had the entire approval of the British Government. It was afterwards stated in Parliament on the part of the Ministry that a despatch recommending to Lord Auckland exactly such a course as he pursued crossed on the way his despatch announcing to the Government at home that he had already undertaken the enterprise.

We conquered Dost Mahomed and dethroned him. He made a bold and brilliant, sometimes even a splendid resistance. We took Ghuznee by blowing up one of its gates with bags of powder, and thus admitting the rush of a storming party. It was defended by one of the sons of Dost Mahomed, who became our prisoner. We took Jellalabad, which was defended by Akbar Khan, another of Dost Mahomed's sons, whose name came afterwards to have a hateful sound in all English ears. As we approached Cabul, Dost Mahomed abandoned his capital and fled with a few horsemen across the Indus. Shah Soojah entered Cabul accompanied by the British officers. It was to have been a triumphal entry. The hearts of those who believed in his cause must have sunk within them when they saw how the Shah was received by the people who, Lord Auckland was assured, were so devoted to him. The city received him in sullen silence. Few of its people condescended even to turn

out to see him as he passed. The vast majority stayed away and disdained even to look at him. One would have thought that the least observant eye must have seen that his throne could not last a moment longer than the time during which the strength of Britain was willing to support it. The British army, however, withdrew, leaving only a contingent of some eight thousand men, besides the Shah's own hirelings, to maintain him for the present. Sir W. Macnaghten seems to have really believed that the work was done, and that Shah Soojah was as safe on his throne as Queen Victoria. He was destined to be very soon and very cruelly undeceived.

Dost Mahomed made more than one effort to regain his place. He invaded Shah Soojah's dominions, and met the combined forces of the Shah and their English ally in more than one battle. On November 2, 1840, he won the admiration of the English themselves by the brilliant stand he made against them. With his Afghan horse he drove our cavalry before him, and forced them to seek the shelter of the British guns. The native troopers would not stand against him: they fled and left their English officers, who vainly tried to rally them. In this battle of Purwandurrah victory might not unreasonably have been claimed for Dost Mahomed. He won at least his part of the battle. No tongues have praised him louder than those of English historians. But Dost Mahomed had the wisdom of a statesman as well as the genius of a soldier. He knew well that

he could not hold out against the strength of England. A savage or semi-barbarous chieftain is easily puffed up by a seeming triumph over a great Power, and is led to his destruction by the vain hope that he can hold out against it to the last. Dost Mahomed had no such ignorant and idle notion. Perhaps he knew well enough too that time was wholly on his side; that he had only to wait and see the sovereignty of Shah Soojah tumble into pieces. The evening after his brilliant exploit in the field Dost Mahomed rode quietly up to the quarters of Sir W. Macnaghten, met the envoy, who was returning from an evening ride, and to Macnaghten's utter amazement announced himself as Dost Mahomed, tendered to the envoy the sword that had flashed so splendidly across the field of the previous day's fight, and surrendered himself a prisoner. His sword was returned; he was treated with all honour; and a few days afterwards he was sent to India, where a residence and a revenue were assigned to him.

But the withdrawal of Dost Mahomed from the scene did nothing to secure the reign of the unfortunate Shah Soojah. The Shah was hated on his own account. He was regarded as a traitor who had sold his country to the foreigners. Insurrections began to be chronic. They were going on in the very midst of Cabul itself. Sir W. Macnaghten was warned of danger, but seemed to take no heed. Some fatal blindness appears to have suddenly fallen on the eyes of our people in Cabul. On November 2, 1841, an insurrection broke out. Sir Alexander Burnes lived in the city itself; Sir W. Macnaghten and the

military commander, Major-General Elphinstone, were in cantonments at some little distance. The insurrection might have been put down in the first instance with hardly the need even of Napoleon's famous 'whiff of grapeshot.' But it was allowed to grow up without attempt at control. Sir Alexander Burnes could not be got to believe that it was anything serious even when a fanatical and furious mob were besieging his own house. The fanatics were especially bitter against Burnes, because they believed that he had been guilty of treachery. They accused him of having pretended to be the friend of Dost Mahomed, deceived him, and brought the English into the country. How entirely innocent of this charge Burnes was we all now know; but it would be idle to deny that there was much in the external aspect of events to excite such a suspicion in the mind of an infuriated Afghan. To the last Burnes refused to believe that he was in danger. He had always been a friend to the Afghans, he said, and he could have nothing to fear. It was true. He had always been the sincere friend of the Afghans. It was his misfortune, and the heavy fault of his superiors, that he had been made to appear as an enemy of the Afghans. He had now to pay a heavy penalty for the errors and the wrong-doing of others. He harangued the raging mob, and endeavoured to bring them to reason. He does not seem to have understood up to the very last moment that by reminding them that he was Alexander Burnes, their old friend, he was only giving them a new reason for demanding his life.

He was murdered in the tumult. He and his brother and all those with them were hacked to pieces with Afghan knives. He was only in his thirty-seventh year when he was murdered. He was the first victim of the policy which had resolved to intervene in the affairs of Afghanistan. Fate seldom showed with more strange and bitter malice her proverbial irony than when she made him the first victim of the policy adopted in despite of his best advice and his strongest warnings.

The murder of Burnes was not a climax ; it was only a beginning. The English troops were quartered in cantonments outside the city, and at some little distance from it. These cantonments were in any case of real difficulty practically indefensible. The popular monarch, the darling of his people, whom we had restored to his throne, was in the Balla Hissar, or citadel of Cabul. From the moment when the insurrection broke out he may be regarded as a prisoner or a besieged man there. He was as utterly unable to help our people as they were to help him. The whole country threw itself into insurrection against him and us. The Afghans attacked the cantonments and actually compelled the English to abandon the forts in which all our commissariat was stored. We were thus threatened with famine even if we could resist the enemy in arms. We were strangely unfortunate in our civil and military leaders. Sir W. Macnaghten was a man of high character and good purpose, but he was weak and credulous. The commander, General Elphinstone, was old, infirm, tor-

tured by disease, broken down both in mind and body, incapable of forming a purpose of his own, or of holding to one suggested by anybody else. His second in command was a far stronger and abler man, but unhappily the two could never agree. 'They were both of them,' says Sir J. W. Kaye, 'brave men. In any other situation, though the physical infirmities of the one and the cankered vanity, the dogmatical perverseness of the other, might have in some measure detracted from their efficiency as military commanders, I believe they would have exhibited sufficient courage and constancy to rescue an army from utter destruction, and the British name from indelible reproach. But in the Cabul cantonments they were miserably out of place. They seem to have been sent there, by superhuman intervention, to work out the utter ruin and prostration of an unholy policy by ordinary human means.' One fact must be mentioned by an English historian; one which an English historian has happily not often to record. It is certain that an officer in our service entered into negotiations for the murder of the insurgent chiefs who were our worst enemies. It is more than probable that he believed in doing so he was acting as Sir W. Macnaghten would have had him do. Sir W. Macnaghten was innocent of any complicity in such a plot, and was incapable of it. But the negotiations were opened and carried on in his name.

A new figure appeared on the scene, a dark and a fierce apparition. This was Akbar Khan, the favourite son of Dost Mahomed. He was a daring, a clever,



an unscrupulous young man. From the moment when he entered Cabul he became the real leader of the insurrection against Shah Soojah and us. Macnaghten, persuaded by the military commander that the position of things was hopeless, consented to enter into negotiations with Akbar Khan. Before the arrival of the latter the chiefs of the insurrection had offered us terms which made the ears of our envoy tingle. Such terms had not often been even suggested to British soldiers before. They were simply unconditional surrender. Macnaghten indignantly rejected them. Everything went wrong with him, however. We were beaten again and again by the Afghans. Our officers never faltered in their duty ; but the melancholy truth has to be told that the men, most of whom were Asiatics, at last began to lose heart and would not fight the enemy. So the envoy was compelled to enter into terms with Akbar Khan and the other chiefs. Akbar Khan received him at first with contemptuous insolence—as a haughty conqueror receives some ignoble and humiliated adversary. It was agreed that the British troops should quit Afghanistan at once ; that Dost Mahomed and his family should be sent back to Afghanistan ; that on his return the unfortunate Shah Soojah should be allowed to take himself off to India or where he would ; and that some British officers should be left at Cabul as hostages for the fulfilment of the conditions.

The evacuation did not take place at once, although the fierce winter was setting in, and the

snow was falling heavily, ominously. Macnaghten seems to have had still some lingering hopes that something would turn up to relieve him from the shame of quitting the country ; and it must be owned that he does not seem to have had any intention of carrying out the terms of the agreement if by any chance he could escape from them. On both sides there were dallyings and delays. At last Akbar Khan made a new and startling proposition to our envoy. It was that they two should enter into a secret treaty, should unite their arms against the other chiefs, and should keep Shah Soojah on the throne as nominal king, with Akbar Khan as his vizier. Macnaghten caught at the proposals. He had entered into terms of negotiation with the Afghan chiefs together ; he now consented to enter into a secret treaty with one of the chiefs to turn their joint arms against the others. It would be idle and shameful to attempt to defend such a policy. We can only excuse it by considering the terrible circumstances of Macnaghten's position ; the manner in which his nerves and moral fibre had been shaken and shattered by calamities ; and his doubts whether he could place any reliance on the promises of the chiefs. He had apparently sunk into that condition of mind which Macaulay tells us that Clive adopted so readily in his dealings with Asiatics, and under the influence of which men naturally honourable and high-minded come to believe that it is right to act treacherously with those whom we believe to be treacherous. All this is but excuse, and rather poor

excuse. When it has all been said and thought of, we must still be glad to believe that there are not many Englishmen who would, under any circumstances, have consented even to give a hearing to the proposals of Akbar Khan.

Whatever Macnaghten's error, it was dearly expiated. He went out at noon next day to confer with Akbar Khan on the banks of the neighbouring river. Three of his officers were with him. Akbar Khan was ominously surrounded by friends and retainers. These kept pressing round the unfortunate envoy. Some remonstrance was made by one of the English officers, but Akbar Khan said it was of no consequence, as they were all in the secret. Not many words were spoken; the expected conference had hardly begun when a signal was given or an order issued by Akbar Khan, and the envoy and the officers were suddenly seized from behind. A scene of wild confusion followed, in which hardly anything is clear and certain but the one most horrible incident. The envoy struggled with Akbar Khan, who had himself seized Macnaghten; Akbar Khan drew from his belt one of a pair of pistols which Macnaghten had presented to him a short time before, and shot him through the body. The fanatics who were crowding round hacked the body to pieces with their knives. Of the three officers one was killed on the spot; the other two were forced to mount Afghan horses and carried away as prisoners.

At first this horrid deed of treachery and blood shows like that to which Clearchus and his com-

panions, the chiefs of the famous ten thousand Greeks, fell victims at the hands of Tissaphernes, the Persian satrap. But it seems certain that the treachery of Akbar, base as it was, did not contemplate more than the seizure of the envoy and his officers. There were jealousies and disputes among the chiefs of the insurrection. One of them in especial had got his mind filled with the conviction, inspired no doubt by the unfortunate and unparalleled negotiation already mentioned, that the envoy had offered a price for his head. Akbar Khan was accused by him of being a secret friend of the envoy and the English. Akbar Khan's father was a captive in the hands of the English, and it may have been thought that on his account and for personal purposes Akbar was favouring the envoy and even intriguing with him. Akbar offered to prove his sincerity by making the envoy a captive and handing him over to the chiefs. This was the treacherous plot which he strove to carry out by entering into the secret negotiations with the easily-deluded envoy. On the fatal day the latter resisted and struggled; Akbar Khan heard a cry of alarm that the English soldiers were coming out of cantonments to rescue the envoy; and, wild with passion, he suddenly drew his pistol and fired. This was the statement made again and again by Akbar Khan himself. It does not seem an improbable explanation for what otherwise looks a murder as stupid and purposeless as it was brutal. The explanation does not much relieve the darkness of Akbar Khan's character. It is given here as history, not as exculpa-

tion. There is not the slightest reason to suppose that Akbar Khan would have shrunk from any treachery or any cruelty which served his purpose. His own explanation of his purpose in this instance shows a degree of treachery which could hardly be surpassed even in the East. But it is well to bear in mind that the suspicion of perfidy under which the English envoy laboured, and which was the main impulse of Akbar Khan's movement, had evidence enough to support it in the eyes of suspicious enemies; and that poor Macnaghten would not have been murdered had he not consented to meet Akbar Khan and treat with him on a proposition to which an English official should never have listened.

A terrible agony of suspense followed among the little English force in the cantonments. The military chiefs afterwards stated that they did not know until the following day that any calamity had befallen the envoy. But a keen suspicion ran through the cantonments that some fearful deed had been done. No step was taken to avenge the death of Macnaghten even when it became known that his hacked and mangled body had been exhibited in triumph all through the streets and bazaars of Cabul. A paralysis seemed to have fallen over the councils of our military chiefs. On December 24, 1841, came a letter from one of the officers seized by Akbar Khan, accompanying proposals for a treaty from the Afghan chiefs. It is hard now to understand how any English officers could have consented to enter into terms with the murderers of Macnaghten before his mangled

body could well have ceased to bleed. It is strange that it did not occur to most of them that there was an alternative; that they were not ordered by fate to accept whatever the conquerors chose to offer. We can all see the difficulty of their position. General Elphinstone and his second in command, Brigadier Shelton, were convinced that it would be equally impossible to stay where they were or to cut their way through the Afghans. But it might have occurred to many that they were nevertheless not bound to treat with the Afghans. They might have remembered the famous answer of the father in Corneille's immortal drama, who is asked what his son could have done but yield in the face of such odds, and exclaims in generous passion that he could have died. One English officer of mark did counsel his superiors in this spirit. This was Major Eldred Pottinger, whose skill and courage in the defence of Herat we have already mentioned. Pottinger was for cutting their way through all enemies and difficulties as far as they could, and then occupying the ground with their dead bodies. But his advice was hardly taken into consideration. It was determined to treat with the Afghans; and treating with the Afghans now meant accepting any terms the Afghans chose to impose on their fallen enemies. In the negotiations that went on some written documents were exchanged. One of these, drawn up by the English negotiators, contains a short sentence which we believe to be absolutely unique in the history of British dealings with armed enemies. It is an appeal to the

Afghan conquerors not to be too hard upon the vanquished; not to break the bruised reed. 'In friendship, kindness and consideration are necessary, not overpowering the weak with sufferings!' In friendship!—we appealed to the friendship of Macnaghten's murderers; to the friendship, in any case, of the man whose father we had dethroned and driven into exile. Not overpowering the weak with sufferings! The weak were the English! One might fancy he was reading the plaintive and piteous appeal of some forlorn and feeble tribe of helpless half-breeds for the mercy of arrogant and mastering rulers. 'Suffolk's imperious tongue is stern and rough,' says one in Shakespeare's pages when he is bidden to ask for consideration at the hands of captors whom he is no longer able to resist. The tongue with which the English force at Cabul addressed the Afghans was not imperious or stern or rough. It was bated, mild and plaintive. Only the other day, it would seem, these men had blown up the gates of Ghuznee and rushed through the dense smoke and the falling ruins to attack the enemy hand to hand. Only the other day our envoy had received in surrender the bright sword of Dost Mahomed. Now the same men who had seen these things could only plead for a little gentleness of consideration, and had no thought of resistance, and did not any longer seem to know how to die.

We accepted the terms of treaty offered to us. Nothing else could be done by men who were not prepared to adopt the advice of the heroic father in

Corneille. The English were at once to take themselves off out of Afghanistan, giving up all their guns except six, which they were allowed to retain for their necessary defence in their mournful journey home; they were to leave behind all the treasure, and to guarantee the payment of something additional for the safe conduct of the poor little army to Peshawur or to Jellalabad; and they were to hand over six officers as hostages for the due fulfilment of the conditions. It is of course understood that the conditions included the immediate release of Dost Mahomed and his family and their return to Afghanistan. When these should return, the six hostages were to be released. Only one concession had been obtained from the conquerors. It was at first demanded that some of the married ladies should be left as hostages; but on the urgent representations of the English officers this condition was waived—at least for the moment. When the treaty was signed, the officers who had been seized when Macnaghten was murdered were released.

It is worth mentioning that these officers were not badly treated by Akbar Khan while they were in his power. On the contrary, he had to make strenuous efforts, and did make them in good faith, to save them from being murdered by bands of his fanatical followers. One of the officers has himself described the almost desperate efforts which Akbar Khan had to make to save him from the fury of the mob, who thronged thirsting for the blood of the Englishman up to the very stirrup of their young chief. 'Akbar



Khan,' says this officer, 'at length drew his sword and laid about him right manfully' in defence of his prisoner. When, however, he had got the latter into a place of safety, the impetuous young Afghan chief could not restrain a sneer at his captive and the cause his captive represented. Turning to the English officer, he said more than once, 'in a tone of triumphant derision,' some words such as these: 'So you are the man who came here to seize my country?' It must be owned that the condition of things gave bitter meaning to the taunt, if they did not actually excuse it. At a later period of this melancholy story it is told by Lady Sale that crowds of the fanatical Ghilzyes were endeavouring to persuade Akbar Khan to slaughter all the English, and that when he tried to pacify them they said that when Burnes came into the country they entreated Akbar Khan's father to have Burnes killed, or he would go back to Hindostan, and on some future day return and bring an army with him, 'to take our country from us;' and all the calamities had come upon them because Dost Mahomed would not take their advice. Akbar Khan either was or pretended to be moderate. He might indeed safely put on an air of magnanimity. His enemies were doomed. It needed no command from him to decree their destruction.

The withdrawal from Cabul began. It was the heart of a cruel winter. The English had to make their way through the awful pass of Koord Cabul. This stupendous gorge runs for some five miles between mountain ranges so narrow, lofty and grim,

that in the winter season the rays of the sun can hardly pierce its darkness even at the noontide. Down the centre dashed a precipitous mountain torrent so fiercely that the stern frost of that terrible time could not stay its course. The snow lay in masses on the ground; the rocks and stones that raised their heads above the snow in the way of the unfortunate travellers were slippery with frost. Soon the white snow began to be stained and splashed with blood. Fearful as this Koord Cabul Pass was, it was only a degree worse than the road which for two whole days the English had to traverse to reach it. The army which set out from Cabul numbered more than four thousand fighting men, of whom Europeans, it should be said, formed but a small proportion; and some twelve thousand camp followers of all kinds. There were also many women and children. Lady Macnaghten, widow of the murdered envoy; Lady Sale, whose gallant husband was holding Jellalabad at the near end of the Khyber Pass towards the Indian frontier; Mrs. Sturt, her daughter, soon to be widowed by the death of her young husband; Mrs. Trevor and her seven children, and many other pitiable fugitives. The winter journey would have been cruel and dangerous enough in time of peace; but this journey had to be accomplished in the midst of something far worse than common war. At every step of the road, every opening of the rocks, the unhappy crowd of confused and heterogeneous fugitives were beset by bands of savage fanatics, who with their long guns and long knives were murdering all

they could reach. It was all the way a confused constant battle against a guerilla enemy of the most furious and merciless temper, who were perfectly familiar with the ground, and could rush forward and retire exactly as suited their tactics. The English soldiers, weary, weak and crippled by frost, could make but a poor fight against the savage Afghans. 'It was no longer,' says Sir J. W. Kaye, 'a retreating army; it was a rabble in chaotic flight.' Men, women, and children, horses, ponies, camels, the wounded, the dying, the dead, all crowded together in almost inextricable confusion among the snow and amid the relentless enemies. 'The massacre'—to quote again from Sir J. W. Kaye, 'was fearful in this Koord Cabul Pass. Three thousand men are said to have fallen under the fire of the enemy, or to have dropped down paralysed and exhausted to be slaughtered by the Afghan knives. And amidst these fearful scenes of carnage, through a shower of matchlock balls, rode English ladies on horseback or in camel-panniers, sometimes vainly endeavouring to keep their children beneath their eyes, and losing them in the confusion and bewilderment of the desolating march.'

Was it for this, then, that our troops had been induced to capitulate? Was this the safe-conduct which the Afghan chiefs had promised in return for their accepting the ignominious conditions imposed on them? Some of the chiefs did exert themselves to their utmost to protect the unfortunate English. It is not certain what the real wish of Akbar Khan

may have been. He protested that he had no power to restrain the hordes of fanatical Ghilzyes whose own immediate chiefs had not authority enough to keep them from murdering the English whenever they got a chance. The force of some few hundred horsemen whom Akbar Khan had with him were utterly incapable, he declared, of maintaining order among such a mass of infuriated and lawless savages. Akbar Khan constantly appeared on the scene during this journey of terror. At every opening or break of the long straggling flight he and his little band of followers showed themselves on the horizon: trying still to protect the English from utter ruin, as he declared; come to gloat over their misery and to see that it was surely accomplished, some of the unhappy English were ready to believe. Yet his presence was something that seemed to give a hope of protection. Akbar Khan at length startled the English by a proposal that the women and children who were with the army should be handed over to his custody to be conveyed by him in safety to Peshawur. There was nothing better to be done. The only modification of his request, or command, that could be obtained was that the husbands of the married ladies should accompany their wives. With this agreement the women and children were handed over to the care of this dreaded enemy, and Lady Macnaghten had to undergo the agony of a personal interview with the man whose own hand had killed her husband. Few scenes in poetry or romance can surely be more thrilling with emotion than such a meeting

as this must have been. Akbar Khan was kindly in his language, and declared to the unhappy widow that he would give his right arm to undo, if it were possible, the deed that he had done.

The women and children and the married men whose wives were among this party were taken from the unfortunate army and placed under the care of Akbar Khan. As events turned out this proved a fortunate thing for them. But in any case it was the best thing that could be done. Not one of these women and children could have lived through the horrors of the journey which lay before the remnant of what had once been a British force. The march was resumed ; new horrors set in ; new heaps of corpses stained the snow ; and then Akbar Khan presented himself with a fresh proposition. In the treaty made at Cabul between the English authorities and the Afghan chiefs there was an article which stipulated that 'the English force at Jellalabad shall march for Peshawur before the Cabul army arrives, and shall not delay on the road.' Akbar Khan was especially anxious to get rid of the little army at Jellalabad at the near end of the Khyber Pass. He desired above all things that it should be on the march home to India ; either that it might be out of his way, or that he might have a chance of destroying it on its way. It was in great measure as a security for its moving that he desired to have the women and children under his care. It is not likely that he meant any harm to the women and children ; it must be remembered that his father and

many of the women of his family were under the control of the British Government as prisoners in Hindostan. But he fancied that if he had the English women in his hands the army at Jellalabad could not refuse to obey the condition set down in the article of the treaty. Now that he had the women in his power, however, he demanded other guarantees with openly acknowledged purpose of keeping these latter until Jellalabad should have been evacuated. He demanded that General Elphinstone, the commander, with his second in command, and also one other officer, should hand themselves over to him as hostages. He promised if this were done to exert himself more than before to restrain the fanatical tribes, and also to provide the army in the Koord Cabul Pass with provisions. There was nothing for it but to submit; and the English general himself became, with the women and children, a captive in the hands of the inexorable enemy.

Then the march of the army, without a general, went on again. Soon it became the story of a general without an army; before very long there was neither general nor army. It is idle to lengthen a tale of mere horrors. The straggling remnant of an army entered the Jugdulluk Pass—a dark, steep, narrow, ascending path between crags. The miserable toilers found that the fanatical, implacable tribes had barricaded the pass. All was over. The army of Cabul was finally extinguished in that barricaded pass. It was a trap; the British were taken in it. A few mere fugitives escaped from the scene of

actual slaughter, and were on the road to Jellalabad, where Sale and his little army were holding their own. When they were within sixteen miles of Jellalabad the number was reduced to six. Of these six, five were killed by straggling marauders on the way. One man alone reached Jellalabad to tell the tale. Literally one man, Dr. Brydon, came to Jellalabad out of a moving host which had numbered in all some sixteen thousand when it set out on its march. The curious eye will search through history or fiction in vain for any picture more thrilling with the suggestions of an awful catastrophe than that of this solitary survivor, faint and reeling on his jaded horse, as he appeared under the walls of Jellalabad, to bear the tidings of our Thermopylæ of pain and shame.

This is the crisis of the story. With this at least the worst of the pain and shame were destined to end. The rest is all, so far as we are concerned, reaction and recovery. Our successes are common enough; we may tell their tale briefly in this instance. The garrison at Jellalabad had received before Dr. Brydon's arrival an intimation that they were to go out and march towards India in accordance with the terms of the treaty extorted from Elphinstone at Cabul. They very properly declined to be bound by a treaty which, as General Sale rightly conjectured, had been 'forced from our envoy and military commander with the knives at their throats.' General Sale's determination was clear and simple. 'I propose to hold this place on the part of Government until I receive its order to the con-

trary.' This resolve of Sale's was really the turning point of the history. Sale held Jellalabad; Nott was at Candahar. Akbar Khan besieged Jellalabad. Nature seemed to have declared herself emphatically on his side, for a succession of earthquake shocks shattered the walls of the place, and produced more terrible destruction than the most formidable guns of modern warfare could have done. But the garrison held out fearlessly; they restored the parapets, re-established every battery, re-trenched the whole of the gates, and built up all the breaches. They resisted every attempt of Akbar Khan to advance upon their works, and at length, when it became certain that General Pollock was forcing the Khyber Pass to come to their relief, they determined to attack Akbar Khan's army; they issued boldly out of their forts, forced a battle on the Afghan chief, and completely defeated him. Before Pollock, having gallantly fought his way through the Khyber Pass, had reached Jellalabad, the beleaguering army had been entirely defeated and dispersed. General Nott at Candahar was ready now to co-operate with General Sale and General Pollock for any movement on Cabul which the authorities might advise or sanction. Meanwhile the unfortunate Shah Soojah, whom we had restored with so much pomp of announcement to the throne of his ancestors, was dead. He was assassinated in Cabul, soon after the departure of the British, by the orders of some of the chiefs who detested him; and his body, stripped of its royal robes and its many jewels, was flung into a



ditch. Historians quarrel a good deal over the question of his sincerity and fidelity in his dealings with us. It is not likely that an Oriental of his temperament and his weakness could have been capable of any genuine and unmixed loyalty to the English strangers. It seems to us probable enough that he may at important moments have wavered and even faltered, glad to take advantage of any movement that might safely rid him of us, and yet on the whole preferring our friendship and our protection to the tender mercies which he was doomed to experience when our troops had left him. But if we ask concerning his gratitude to us, it may be well also to ask what there was in our conduct towards him which called for any enthusiastic display of gratitude. We did not help him out of any love for him, or any concern for the justice of his cause. It served us to have a puppet, and we took him when it suited us. We also abandoned him when it suited us. As Lady Teazle proposes to do with honour in her conference with Joseph Surface, so we ought to do with gratitude in discussing the merits of Shah Soojah—leave it out of the question. What Shah Soojah owed to us was a few weeks of idle pomp and absurd dreams, a bitter awakening and a shameful death.

During this time a new Governor-General had arrived in India. Lord Auckland's time had run out, and during its latter months he had become nerveless and despondent because of the utter failure of the policy which in an evil hour for himself and his

country he had been induced to undertake. It does not seem that it ever was at heart a policy of his own, and he knew that the East India Company were altogether opposed to it. The Company were well aware of the vast expense which our enterprises in Afghanistan must impose on the revenues of India, and they looked forward eagerly to the earliest opportunity of bringing it to a close. Lord Auckland had been persuaded into adopting it against his better judgment, and against even the whisperings of his conscience; and now he too longed to be done with it; but he wished to leave Afghanistan as a magnanimous conqueror. He had in his own person discounted the honours of victory. He had received an earldom for the services he was presumed to have rendered to his sovereign and his country. He had therefore in full sight that mournful juxtaposition of incongruous objects which a great English writer has described so touchingly and tersely—the trophies of victory and the battle lost. He was an honourable, kindly gentleman, and the news of all the successive calamities fell upon him with a crushing, an overwhelming weight. In plain language, the Governor-General lost his head. He seemed to have no other idea than that of getting all our troops as quickly as might be out of Afghanistan and shaking the dust of the place off our feet for ever. It may be doubted whether, if we had pursued such a policy as this, we might not as well have left India itself once for all. If we had allowed it to seem clear to the Indian populations and princes that we could be driven out

of Afghanistan with humiliation and disaster, and that we were unable or afraid to strike one blow to redeem our military credit, we should before long have seen in Hindostan many an attempt to enact there the scenes of Cabul and Candahar. Unless a moralist is prepared to say that a nation which has committed one error of policy is bound in conscience to take all the worst and most protracted consequences of that error, and never make any attempt to protect itself against them, even a moralist of the most scrupulous character can hardly deny that we were bound, for the sake of our interests in Europe as well as in India, to prove that our strength had not been broken nor our counsels paralysed by the disasters in Afghanistan. Yet Lord Auckland does not appear to have thought anything of the kind either needful or within the compass of our national strength. He was, in fact, a broken man.

His successor came out with the brightest hopes of India and the world, founded on his energy and strength of mind. The successor was Lord Ellenborough, the son of that Edward Law, afterwards Lord Ellenborough, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, who had been leading counsel for Warren Hastings when the latter was impeached before the House of Lords. The second Ellenborough was at the time of his appointment filling the office of President of the Board of Control, an office he had held before. He was therefore well acquainted with the affairs of India. He had come into office under Sir Robert Peel on the resignation of the Melbourne

Ministry. He was looked upon as a man of great ability and energy. It was known that his personal predilections were for the career of a soldier. He was fond of telling his hearers then and since that the life of a camp was that which he should have loved to lead. He was a man of great and, in certain lights, apparently splendid abilities. There was a certain Orientalism about his language, his aspirations and his policy. He loved gorgeousness and dramatic—ill-natured persons said theatric—effects. Life arranged itself in his eyes as a superb and showy pageant of which it would have been his ambition to form the central figure. His eloquence was often of a lofty and noble order. Men who are still hardly of middle age can remember Lord Ellenborough on great occasions in the House of Lords, and can recollect their having been deeply impressed by him, even though they had but lately heard such speakers as Gladstone or Bright in the other House. It was not easy, indeed, sometimes to avoid the conviction that in listening to Lord Ellenborough one was listening to a really great orator of a somewhat antique and stately type, who attuned his speech to the pitch of an age of loftier and less prosaic aims than ours. When he had a great question to deal with, and when his instincts, if not his reasoning power, had put him on the right, or at least the effective, side of it, he could speak in a tone of poetic and elevated eloquence to which it was impossible to listen without emotion. But if Lord Ellenborough was in some respects a man of genius, he was also a man whose love of

mere effects often made him seem like a quack. There are certain characters in which a little of unconscious quackery is associated with some of the elements of true genius. Lord Ellenborough was one of these. Far greater men than he must be associated in the same category. The elder Pitt, the first Napoleon, Mirabeau, Bolingbroke, and many others, were men in whom undoubtedly some of the *charlatan* was mixed up with some of the very highest qualities of genius. In Lord Ellenborough this blending was strongly, and sometimes even startlingly, apparent. To this hour there are men who knew him well in public and private on whom his weaknesses made so disproportionate an impression that they can see in him little more than a mere *charlatan*. This is entirely unjust. He was a man of great abilities and earnestness, who had in him a strange dash of the play-actor, who at the most serious moment of emergency always thought of how to display himself effectively, and who would have met the peril of an empire as poor Narcissa met death, with an overmastering desire to show to the best personal advantage.

Lord Ellenborough's appointment was hailed by all parties in India as the most auspicious that could be made. Here, people said, is surely the great stage for a great actor; and now the great actor is coming. There would be something fascinating to a temper like his in the thought of redeeming the military honour of his country and standing out in history as the avenger of the shames of Cabul. But those who thought in this way found themselves suddenly dis-

appointed. Lord Ellenborough uttered and wrote a few showy sentences about revenging our losses and 're-establishing in all its original brilliancy our military character.' But when he had done this he seemed to have relieved his mind and to have done enough. With him there was a constant tendency to substitute grandiose phrases for deeds; or perhaps to think that the phrase was the thing of real moment. He said these fine words, and then at once he announced that the only object of the Government was to get the troops out of Afghanistan as quickly as might be, and almost on any terms. The whole of Lord Ellenborough's conduct during this crisis is inexplicable except on the assumption that he really did not know at certain times how to distinguish between phrases and actions. A general outcry was raised in India and among the troops in Afghanistan against the extraordinary policy which Lord Ellenborough propounded. Englishmen, in fact, refused to believe in it; took it as something that must be put aside. English soldiers could not believe that they were to be recalled after defeat; they persisted in the conviction that, let the Governor-General say what he might, his intention must be that the army should retrieve its fame and retire only after complete victory. The Governor-General himself after a while quietly acted on this interpretation of his meaning. He allowed the military commanders in Afghanistan to pull their resources together and prepare for inflicting signal chastisement on the enemy. They were not long in doing this. They encountered the enemy

wherever he showed himself and defeated him. They recaptured town after town, until at length, on September 15, 1842, General Pollock's force entered Cabul. A few days after, as a lasting mark of retribution for the crimes which had been committed there, the British commander ordered the destruction of the great bazaar of Cabul, where the mangled remains of the unfortunate envoy Macnaghten had been exhibited in brutal triumph and joy to the Afghan populace.

It is not necessary to enter into detailed descriptions of the successful progress of our arms. The war may be regarded as over. It is, however, necessary to say something of the fate of the captives, or hostages, who were hurried away that terrible January night at the command of Akbar Khan. One thing has first to be told which some may now receive with incredulity, but which is, nevertheless, true—there was a British general, who was disposed to leave them to their fate and take no trouble about them, and who declared himself under the conviction, from the tenor of all Lord Ellenborough's despatches, that the recovery of the prisoners was 'a matter of indifference to the Government.' There seems to have been some unhappy spell working against us in all this chapter of our history, by virtue of which even its most brilliant pages were destined to have something ignoble or ludicrous written on them. Better counsels, however, prevailed. General Pollock insisted on an effort being made to recover the prisoners before the troops began to return to India, and he appointed to this

noble duty the husband of one of the hostage ladies—Sir Robert Sale. The prisoners were recovered with greater ease than was expected—so many of them as were yet alive. Poor General Elphinstone had long before succumbed to disease and hardship. The ladies had gone through strange privations. Thirty-six years ago the tale of the captivity of Lady Sale and her companions was in every mouth all over England; nor did any civilised land fail to take an interest in the strange and pathetic story. They were hurried from fort to fort as the designs and the fortunes of Akbar Khan dictated his disposal of them. They suffered almost every fierce alternation of cold and heat. They had to live on the coarsest fare; they were lodged in a manner which would have made the most wretched prison accommodation of a civilised country seem luxurious by comparison; they were in constant uncertainty and fear, not knowing what might befall. Yet they seem to have held up their courage and spirits wonderfully well, and to have kept the hearts of the children alive with mirth and sport at moments of the utmost peril. Gradually it became more and more suspected that the fortunes of Akbar Khan were falling. At last it was beyond doubt that he had been completely defeated. Then they were hurried away again, they knew not whither, through ever-ascending mountain passes, under a scorching sun. They were being carried off to the wild rugged regions of the Indian Caucasus. They were bestowed in a miserable fort at Bameean. They were now under the charge of one



of Akbar Khan's soldiers of fortune. This man had begun to suspect that things were wellnigh hopeless with Akbar Khan. He was induced by gradual and very cautious approaches to enter into an agreement with the prisoners for their release. The English officers signed an agreement with him to secure him a large reward, and a pension for life, if he enabled them to escape. He accordingly declared that he renounced his allegiance to Akbar Khan; all the more readily, seeing that news came in of the chief's total defeat and flight, no one knew whither. The prisoners and their escort, lately their gaoler and guards, set forth on their way to General Pollock's camp. On their way they met the English parties sent out to seek for them. Sir Robert Sale found his wife again. 'Our joy,' says one of the rescued prisoners 'was too great, too overwhelming, for tongue to utter.' Description, indeed, could do nothing for the effect of such a meeting but to spoil it.

There is a very different ending to the episode of the English captives in Bokhara. Colonel Stoddart, who had been sent to the Persian camp in the beginning of all these events to insist that Persia must desist from the siege of Herat, was sent subsequently on a mission to the Ameer of Bokhara. The Ameer received him favourably at first, but afterwards became suspicious of English designs of conquest, and treated Stoddart with marked indignity. The Ameer appears to have been the very model of a melodramatic Eastern tyrant. He was cruel and capricious as another Caligula, and perhaps in truth quite as mad.

He threw Stoddart into prison. Captain Conolly was appointed two years after to proceed to Bokhara and other countries of the same region. He undertook to endeavour to effect the liberation of Stoddart, but could only succeed in sharing his sufferings, and, at last, his fate. The Ameer had written a letter to the Queen of England, and the answer was written by the Foreign Secretary, referring the Ameer to the Governor-General of India. The savage tyrant redoubled the ill-treatment of his captives. He accused them of being spies and of giving help to his enemies. The Indian Government were of opinion that the envoys had in some manner exceeded their instructions, and that Conolly in particular had contributed by indiscretion to his own fate. Nothing therefore was done to obtain their release beyond diplomatic efforts, and appeals to the magnanimity of the Ameer which had not any particular effect. Dr. Wolff, the celebrated traveller and missionary, afterwards undertook an expedition of his own in the hope of saving the unfortunate captives; but he only reached Bokhara in time to hear that they had been put to death. The moment and the actual manner of their death cannot be known to positive certainty, but there is little doubt that they were executed on the same day by the orders of the Ameer. The journals of Conolly have been preserved up to an advanced period of his captivity, and they relieve so far the melancholy of the fate that fell on the unfortunate officers by showing that the horrors of their hopeless imprisonment were so great that their dearest friends

must have been glad to know of their release even by the knife of the executioner. It is perhaps not the least bitter part of the story, that in the belief of many, including the unfortunate officers themselves, the course pursued by the English authorities in India had done more to hand them over to the treacherous cruelty of their captor than to release them from his power. In truth the authorities in India had had enough of intervention. It would have needed a great exigency indeed to stir them into energy of action soon again in Central Asia.

This thrilling chapter of English history closes with something like a piece of harlequinade. The curtain fell amid general laughter. Only the genius of Lord Ellenborough could have turned the mood of India and of England to mirth on such a subject. Lord Ellenborough was equal to this extraordinary feat. The never-to-be-forgotten proclamation about the restoration to India of the gates of the temple of Somnauth, redeemed at Lord Ellenborough's orders when Ghuznee was retaken by the English, was first received with incredulity as a practical joke; then with one universal burst of laughter; then with indignation; and then, again, when the natural anger had died away, with laughter again. 'My brothers and my friends,' wrote Lord Ellenborough 'to all the princes, chiefs, and people of India,'—'Our victorious army bears the gates of the temple of Somnauth in triumph from Afghanistan, and the despoiled tomb of Sultan Mahmoud looks upon the ruins of Ghuznee. The insult of eight hundred years

is at last avenged. The gates of the temple of Somnauth, so long the memorial of your humiliation, are become the proudest record of your national glory; the proof of your superiority in arms over the nations beyond the Indus.'

No words of pompous man could possibly have put together greater absurdities. The brothers and friends were Mahometans and Hindoos, who were about as likely to agree as to the effect of these symbols of triumph as a Fenian and an Orangeman would be to fraternize in a toast to the glorious, pious and immortal memory. To the Mahometans the triumph of Lord Ellenborough was simply an insult. To the Hindoos the offer was ridiculous, for the temple of Somnauth itself was in ruins, and the ground it covered was trodden by Mahometans. To finish the absurdity, the gates proved not to be genuine relics at all.

On October 1, 1842, exactly four years since Lord Auckland's proclamation announcing and justifying the intervention to restore Shah Soojah, Lord Ellenborough issued another proclamation announcing the complete failure and the revocation of the policy of his predecessor. Lord Ellenborough declared that 'to force a sovereign upon a reluctant people would be as inconsistent with the policy as it is with the principles of the British Government;' that therefore they would recognise any government approved by the Afghans themselves; that the British arms would be withdrawn from Afghanistan, and that the Government of India would remain

'content with the limits nature appears to have assigned to its empire.' Dost Mahomed was released from his captivity, and before long was ruler of Cabul once again. Thus ended the story of our expedition to reorganise the internal condition of Afghanistan. After four years of unparalleled trial and disaster everything was restored to the condition in which we found it; except that there were so many brave Englishmen sleeping in bloody graves. The Duke of Wellington ascribed the causes of our failure to making war with a peace establishment; making war without a safe base of operations; carrying the native army out of India into a strange and cold climate; invading a poor country which was unequal to the supply of our wants; giving undue power to political agents; want of forethought and undue confidence in the Afghans on the part of Sir W. Macnaghten; placing our magazines, even our treasure, in indefensible places; great military neglect and mismanagement after the outbreak. Doubtless these were in a military sense the reasons for the failure of an enterprise which cost the revenues of India an enormous amount of treasure. But the causes of failure were deeper than any military errors could explain. It is doubtful whether the genius of a Napoleon and the forethought of a Wellington could have won any permanent success for an enterprise founded on so false and fatal a policy. Nothing in the ability or devotion of those entrusted with the task of carrying it out, could have made it deserve success. Our first error of principle was to go com-

pletely out of our way for the purpose of meeting mere speculative dangers; our next and far greater error was made when we attempted, in the words of Lord Ellenborough's proclamation, to force a sovereign upon a reluctant people.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE REPEAL YEAR.

‘THE year 1843,’ said O’Connell, ‘is and shall be the great Repeal year.’ In the year 1843, at all events, O’Connell and his Repeal agitation are entitled to the foremost place. The character of the man himself well deserves some calm consideration. We are now, perhaps, in a condition to do it justice. We are far removed in sentiment and political association, if not exactly in years, from the time when O’Connell was the idol of one party, and the object of all the bitterest scorn and hatred of the other. No man of his time was so madly worshipped and so fiercely denounced. No man in our time was ever the object of so much abuse in the newspapers. The fiercest and coarsest attacks that we can remember to have been made in English journals on Cobden and Bright during the heat of the Anti-Corn Law agitation seem placid, gentle and almost complimentary when compared with the criticisms daily applied to O’Connell. The only vituperation which could equal in vehemence and scurrility that poured out upon O’Connell was that which O’Connell himself poured out upon his assailants. His hand was against every man, if every

man's hand was against him. He asked for no quarter, and he gave none.

We have outlived, not the times merely but the whole spirit of the times so far as political controversy is concerned. We are now able to recognise the fact that a public man may hold opinions which are distasteful to the majority, and yet be perfectly sincere and worthy of respect. We are well aware that a man may differ from us, even on vital questions, and yet be neither fool nor knave. But this view of things was not generally taken in the days of O'Connell's great agitation. He and his enemies alike acted in their controversies on the principle that a political opponent is necessarily a blockhead or a scoundrel. It is strange and somewhat melancholy to read the strictures of so enlightened a woman as Miss Martineau upon O'Connell. They are all based upon what a humorous writer has called the 'fiend-in-human-shape theory.' Miss Martineau not merely assumes that O'Connell was absolutely insincere and untrustworthy, but discourses of him on the assumption that he was knowingly and purposely a villain. Not only does she hold that his Repeal agitation was an unqualified evil for his country, and that Repeal, if gained, would have been a curse to it, but she insists that O'Connell himself was thoroughly convinced of the facts. She devotes whole pages of lively and acrid argument to prove, not only that O'Connell was ruining his country, but that he knew he was ruining it, and persevered in his wickedness out of pure self-seeking. No writer possessed of one-tenth of Miss



Martineau's intellect and education would now reason after that fashion about any public man. If there is any common delusion of past days which may be taken as entirely exploded now, it is the idea that any man ever swayed vast masses of people, and became the idol and the hero of a nation, by the strength of a conscious hypocrisy and imposture.

O'Connell in this Repeal year, as he called it, was by far the most prominent politician in these countries who had never been in office. He had been the patron of the Melbourne Ministry, and his patronage had proved baneful to it. One of the great causes of the detestation in which the Melbourne Whigs were held by a vast number of English people was their alleged subserviency to the Irish agitator. We cannot be surprised if the English public just then was little inclined to take an impartial estimate of O'Connell. He had attacked some of their public men in language of the fiercest denunciation. He had started an agitation which seemed as if it were directly meant to bring about a break-up of the Imperial system so lately completed by the Act of Union. He was opposed to the existence of the State Church in Ireland. He was the bitter enemy of the Irish landlord class—of the landlords, that is to say, who took their title in any way from England. He was familiarly known in the graceful controversy of the time as the 'Big Beggarman.' It was an article of faith with the general public that he was enriching himself at the expense of a poor and foolish people. It is a matter of fact that he had given up a splendid

practice at the bar to carry on his agitation ; that he lost by the agitation, pecuniarily, far more than he ever got by it ; that he had not himself received from first to last anything like the amount of the noble tribute so becomingly and properly given to Mr. Cobden, and so honourably accepted by him ; and that he died poor, leaving his sons poor. Indeed, it is a remarkable evidence of the purifying nature of any great political cause, even where the object sought is but a phantom, that it is hardly possible to give a single instance of a great political agitation carried on in these countries and in modern times by leaders who had any primary purpose of making money. But at that time the general English public were firmly convinced that O'Connell was simply keeping up his agitation for the sake of pocketing 'the rent.' Some of the qualities, too, that specially endeared him to his Celtic countrymen made him particularly objectionable to Englishmen ; and Englishmen have never been famous for readiness to enter into the feelings and accept the point of view of other peoples. O'Connell was a thorough Celt. He represented all the impulsiveness, the quick-changing emotions, the passionate, exaggerated loves and hatreds, the heedlessness of statement, the tendency to confound impressions with facts, the ebullient humour—all the other qualities that are especially characteristic of the Celt. The Irish people were the audience to which O'Connell habitually played. It may indeed be said that even in playing to this audience he commonly played to the gallery. As the orator of a

popular assembly, as the orator of a monster meeting, he probably never had an equal in these countries. He had many of the physical endowments that are especially favourable to success in such a sphere. He had a herculean frame, a stately presence, a face capable of expressing easily and effectively the most rapid alternations of mood, and a voice which all hearers admit to have been almost unrivalled for strength and sweetness. Its power, its pathos, its passion, its music have been described in words of positive rapture by men who detested O'Connell, and who would rather if they could have denied to him any claim on public attention, even in the matter of voice. He spoke without studied preparation, and of course had all the defects of such a style. He fell into repetition and into carelessness of construction; he was hurried away into exaggeration and sometimes into mere bombast. But he had all the peculiar success, too, which rewards the orator who can speak without preparation. He always spoke right to the hearts of his hearers. On the platform or in Parliament, whatever he said was said to his audience, and was never in the nature of a discourse delivered over their heads. He entered the House of Commons when he was nearly fifty-four years of age. Most persons supposed that the style of speaking he had formed, first in addressing juries, and next in rousing Irish mobs, must cause his failure when he came to appeal to the unsympathetic and fastidious House of Commons. But it is certain that O'Connell became one of the most successful Parliamentary orators of

his time. Lord Jeffrey, a professional critic, declared that all other speakers in the House seemed to him only talking schoolboy-talk after he had heard O'Connell. No man we now know of is less likely to be carried away by any of the claptrap arts of a false demagogic style than Mr. Roebuck; and Mr. Roebuck has said that he considers O'Connell the greatest orator he ever heard in the House of Commons. Charles Dickens, when a reporter in the gallery, where he had few equals, if any, in his craft, put down his pencil once when engaged in reporting a speech of O'Connell's on one of the tithe riots in Ireland, and declared that he could not take notes of the speech, so moved was he by its pathos. Lord Beaconsfield, who certainly had no great liking for O'Connell, has spoken in terms as high as anyone could use about his power over the House. But O'Connell's eloquence only helped him to make all the more enemies in the House of Commons. He was reckless even there in his denunciation, although he took care never to obtrude on Parliament the extravagant and unmeaning abuse of opponents which delighted the Irish mob meetings.

O'Connell was a crafty and successful lawyer. The Irish peasant, like the Scottish, is, or at least then was, remarkably fond of litigation. He delighted in the quirks and quibbles of law, and in the triumphs won by the skill of lawyers over opponents. He admired O'Connell all the more when O'Connell boasted and proved that he could drive a coach and six through any Act of Parliament. One of the

pet heroes of Irish legend is a personage whose cleverness and craft procure for him a *sobriquet* which has been rendered into English by the words 'twists upon twists and tricks upon tricks.' O'Connell was in the eyes of many of the Irish peasantry an embodiment of 'twists upon twists and tricks upon tricks,' enlisted in their cause for the confusion of their adversaries. He had borne the leading part in carrying Catholic Emancipation. He had encountered all the danger and responsibility of the somewhat aggressive movement by which it was finally secured. It is true that it was a reform which in the course of civilisation must have been carried. It had in its favour all the enlightenment of the time. The eloquence of the greatest orators, the intellect of the truest philosophers, the prescience of the wisest statesmen had pleaded for it and helped to make its way clear. No one can doubt that it must in a short time have been carried if O'Connell had never lived. But it was carried just then by virtue of O'Connell's bold agitation and by the wise resolve of the Tory Government not to provoke a civil war. It is deeply to be regretted that Catholic Emancipation was not conceded to the claims of justice. Had it been so yielded, it is very doubtful whether we should ever have heard much of the Repeal agitation. But the Irish people saw, and indeed all the world was made aware of the fact, that emancipation would not have been conceded just then at least but for the fear of civil disturbance. To an Englishman looking coolly back from a distance, the difference is clear between

granting to-day rather than provoke disturbance that which everyone sees must be granted some time, and conceding what the vast majority of the English people believe can never with propriety or even safety be granted at all. But we can hardly wonder if the Irish peasant did not make such distinctions. All he knew was that O'Connell had demanded Catholic Emancipation, and had been answered at first by a direct refusal; that he had said he would compel its concession, and that in the end it was conceded to him. When, therefore, O'Connell said that he would compel the Government to give him repeal of the Union, the Irish peasant naturally believed that he could keep his word.

Nor is there any reason to doubt that O'Connell himself believed in the possibility of accomplishing his purpose. We are apt now to think of the Union between England and Ireland as of time-honoured endurance. It had been scarcely thirty years in existence when O'Connell entered Parliament. The veneration of ancient lineage, the majesty of custom, the respect due to the 'wisdom of our ancestors'—none of these familiar claims could be urged on behalf of the legislative union between England and Ireland. To O'Connell it appeared simply as a modern innovation which had nothing to be said for it except that a majority of Englishmen had by threats and bribery forced it on a majority of Irishmen. Mr. Lecky, the author of the 'History of European Morals,' may be cited as an impartial authority on such a subject. Let us see what he says,

in his work on 'The Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland,' with regard to the movement for repeal of the Union, of which it seems almost needless to say he disapproves. 'O'Connell perceived clearly,' says Mr. Lecky, 'that the tendency of affairs in Europe was towards the recognition of the principle that a nation's will is the one legitimate rule of its government. All rational men acknowledged that the Union was imposed on Ireland by corrupt means contrary to the wish of one generation. O'Connell was prepared to show, by the protest of the vast majority of the people, that it was retained without the acquiescence of the next. He had allied himself with the parties that were rising surely and rapidly to power in England—with the democracy, whose gradual progress is effacing the most venerable landmarks of the Constitution—with the Free Traders, whose approaching triumph he had hailed and exulted in from afar. He had perceived the possibility of forming a powerful party in Parliament, which would be free to co-operate with all English parties without coalescing with any, and might thus turn the balance of factions and decide the fate of Ministries. He saw, too, that while England in a time of peace might resist the expressed will of the Irish nation, its policy would be necessarily modified in time of war; and he predicted that should there be a collision with France while the nation was organised as in 1843, Repeal would be the immediate and the inevitable consequence. In a word, he believed that under a constitutional government the will of four-fifths of a nation, if peacefully, perse-

veringly and energetically expressed, must sooner or later be triumphant. If a war had broken out during the agitation—if the life of O'Connell had been prolonged ten years longer—if any worthy successor had assumed his mantle—if a fearful famine had not broken the spirit of the people—who can say that the agitation would not have been successful?' No one, we fancy, except those who are always convinced that nothing can ever come to pass which they think ought not to come to pass. At all events, if an English political philosopher, surveying the events after a distance of thirty years, is of opinion that Repeal was possible, it is not surprising that O'Connell thought its attainment possible at the time when he set himself to agitate for it. Even if this be not conceded, it will at least be allowed that it is not very surprising if the Irish peasant saw no absurdity in the movement. Our system of government by party does not lay claim to absolute perfection. It is an excellent mechanism on the whole; it is probably the most satisfactory that the wit of man has yet devised for the management of the affairs of a state; but its greatest admirers will bear to be told that it has its drawbacks and disadvantages. One of these undoubtedly is found in the fact that so few reforms are accomplished in deference to the claims of justice, in comparison with those that are yielded to the pressure of numbers. A great English statesman in our own day once said that Parliament had done many just things, but few things because they were just. O'Connell and the



Irish people saw that Catholic Emancipation had been yielded to pressure rather than to justice; it is not wonderful if they thought that pressure might prevail as well in the matter of Repeal.

In many respects O'Connell differed from more modern Irish Nationalists. He was a thorough Liberal. He was a devoted opponent of negro slavery; he was a staunch Free Trader; he was a friend of popular education; he was an enemy to all excess; he was opposed to strikes; he was an advocate of religious equality everywhere; and he declined to receive the commands of the Vatican in his political agitation. 'I am a Catholic, but I am not a Papist,' was his own definition of his religious attitude. He preached the doctrine of constitutional agitation strictly, and declared that no political Reform was worth the shedding of one drop of blood. It may be asked how it came about that with all these excellent attributes, which all critics now allow to him, O'Connell was so detested by the vast majority of the English people. One reason undoubtedly is that O'Connell deliberately revived and worked up for his political purposes the almost extinct national hatreds of Celt and Saxon. As a phrase of political controversy, he may be said to have invented the word 'Saxon.' He gave a terrible licence to his tongue. His abuse was outrageous; his praise was outrageous. The very effusiveness of his loyalty told to his disadvantage. People could not understand how one who perpetually denounced 'the Saxon' could be so enthusiastic and rapturous in his profes-

sions of loyalty to the Saxon's Queen. In the common opinion of Englishmen, all the evils of Ireland, all the troubles attaching to the connection between the two countries, had arisen from this unmitigated, rankling hatred of Celt for Saxon. It was impossible for them to believe that a man who deliberately applied all the force of his eloquence to revive it, could be a genuine patriot. It appeared intolerable that while thus labouring to make the Celt hate the Saxon he should yet profess an extravagant devotion to the Sovereign of England. Yet O'Connell was probably quite sincere in his professions of loyalty. He was in no sense a revolutionist. He had from his education in a French college acquired an early detestation of the principles of the French Revolution. Of the Irish rebels of '98 he spoke with as savage an intolerance as the narrowest English Tories could show in speaking of himself. The Tones, and Emmetts, and Fitzgeralds, whom so many of the Irish people adored, were, in O'Connell's eyes, and in his words, only 'a gang of miscreants.' He grew angry at the slightest expression of an opinion among his followers that seemed to denote even a willingness to discuss any of the doctrines of Communism. His theory and his policy evidently were that Ireland was to be saved by a dictatorship entrusted to himself, with the Irish priesthood acting as his officers and agents. He maintained the authority of the priests, and his own authority by means of them and over them. The political system of the country for the purposes of agitation was to be a sort

of hierarchy ; the parish priests occupying the lowest grade, the bishops standing on the higher steps, and O'Connell himself supreme as the pontiff over all.

He had a Parliamentary system by means of which he proposed to approach more directly the question of Repeal of the Union. He got seats in the House of Commons for a number of his sons, his nephews, and his sworn retainers. 'O'Connell's tail' was the precursor of 'the Pope's Brass Band' in the slang of the House of Commons. He had an almost supreme control over the Irish constituencies, and whenever a vacancy took place he sent down the Repeal candidate to contest it. He always inculcated and insisted on the necessity of order and peace. Indeed, as he proposed to carry on his agitation altogether by the help of the bishops and the priests, it was not possible for him, even were he so inclined, to conduct it on any other than peaceful principles. 'The man who commits a crime gives strength to the enemy,' was a maxim which he was never weary of impressing upon his followers. The Temperance movement set on foot with such remarkable and sudden success by Father Mathew was at once turned to account by O'Connell. He was himself, in his later years at all events, a very temperate man, and he was delighted at the prospect of good order and discipline which the Temperance movement afforded. Father Mathew was very far from sharing all the political opinions of O'Connell. The sweet and simple friar, whose power was that of goodness and enthusiasm only, and who had but

little force of character or intellect, shrank from political agitation, and was rather Conservative than otherwise in his views. But he could not afford to repudiate the support of O'Connell, who on all occasions glorified the Temperance movement, and called upon his followers to join it, and was always boasting of his 'noble army of Teetotallers.' It was probably when he found that the mere fact of his having supported the Melbourne Government did so much to discredit that Government in the eyes of Englishmen, and to bring about its fall, that O'Connell went deliberately out of the path of mere Parliamentary agitation, and started that system of agitation by monster meeting which has since his time been regularly established among us as a principal part of all political organisation for a definite purpose. He founded in Dublin a Repeal Association which met in a place on Burgh Quay, and which he styled Conciliation Hall. Around him in this Association he gathered his sons, his relatives, his devoted followers, priestly and lay. The *Nation* newspaper, then in its youth and full of a fresh literary vigour, was one of his most brilliant instruments. At a later period of the agitation it was destined to be used against him, and with severe effect. The famous monster meetings were usually held on a Sunday, on some open spot, mostly selected for its historic fame, and with all the picturesque surroundings of hill and stream. From the dawn of the summer day the Repealers were thronging to the scene of the meeting. They came from all parts of the neighbouring

country for miles and miles. They were commonly marshalled and guided by their parish priests. They all attended the services of their Church before the meeting began. The influence of his religion and of his patriotic feelings was brought to bear at once upon the impressionable and emotional Irish Celt. At the meeting O'Connell and several of his chosen orators addressed the crowd on the subject of the wrongs done to Ireland by 'the Saxon,' the claims of Ireland to the restoration of her old Parliament in College Green, and the certainty of her having it restored if Irishmen only obeyed O'Connell and their priests, were sober, and displayed their strength and their unity.

O'Connell himself, it is needless to say, was always the great orator of the day. The agitation developed a great deal of literary talent among the younger men of education; but it never brought out a man who was even spoken of as a possible successor to O'Connell in eloquence. His magnificent voice enabled him to do what no genius and no eloquence less aptly endowed could have done. He could send his lightest word thrilling to the extreme of the vast concourse of people whom he desired to move. He swayed them with the magic of an absolute control. He understood all the moods of his people; to address himself to them came naturally to him. He made them roar with laughter; he made them weep; he made them thrill with indignation. As the shadow runs over a field, so the impression of his varying eloquence ran over the assemblage. He

commanded the emotions of his hearers as a consummate conductor sways the energies of his orchestra. Every allusion told. When, in one of the meetings held in his native Kerry, he turned solemnly round and appealed to 'yonder blue mountains where you and I were cradled'; or in sight of the objects he described he apostrophised Ireland as the 'land of the green valley and the rushing river'—an admirably characteristic and complete description; or recalled some historical association connected with the scene he surveyed—each was some special appeal to the instant feelings of his peculiar audience. Sometimes he indulged in the grossest and what ought to have been the most ridiculous flattery of his hearers—flattery which would have offended and disgusted the dullest English audience. But the Irish peasant, with all his keen sense of the ridiculous in others, is singularly open to the influence of any appeal to his own vanity. There is a great deal of the 'eternal-womanly' in the Celtic nature; and it is not easy to overflatter one of the race. Doubtless O'Connell knew this and acted purposely on it; and this was a peculiarity of his political conduct which it would be hard indeed to commend or even to defend. But in truth he adopted in his agitation the tactics he had employed at the bar. 'A good speech is a good thing,' he used to say; 'but the verdict is *the* thing.' His flattery of his hearers was not grosser than his abuse of all those whom they did not like. His disparage often had absolutely no meaning in it. There was no sense whatever in calling the Duke of

Wellington 'a stunted corporal'; one might as well have called Mont Blanc a molehill. Nobody could have shown more clearly than O'Connell did that he did not believe the *Times* to be 'an obscure rag.' It would have been as humorous and as truthful to say that there was no such paper as the *Times*. But these absurdities made an ignorant audience laugh for the moment, and O'Connell had gained the only point he just then wanted to carry. He would probably have answered anyone who remonstrated with him on the disingenuousness of such sayings as Mrs. Thrale says Burke once answered her when she taxed him with a want of literal accuracy, by quoting 'Odds life, must one swear to the truth of a song?' But this recklessness of epithet and description did much to make O'Connell distrusted and disliked in England, where in whatever heat of political controversy words are supposed to be the expressions of some manner of genuine sentiment. Of course many of O'Connell's abusive epithets were not only full of humour, but did to some extent fairly represent the weaknesses at least of those against whom they were directed. Some of his historical allusions were of a more mischievous nature than any mere personalities could have been. 'Peel and Wellington,' he said at Kilkenny, 'may be second Cromwells; they may get Cromwell's blunted truncheon, and they may—oh, sacred heavens!—enact on the fair occupants of that gallery' (pointing to the ladies' gallery), 'the murder of the Wexford women. Let it not be supposed that when I made that appeal to the ladies it was but

a flight of my imagination. No! when Cromwell entered the town of Wexford by treachery, three hundred ladies, the beauty and loveliness of Wexford, the young and the old, the maid and the matron, were collected round the Cross of Christ; they prayed to heaven for mercy, and I hope they found it; they prayed to the English for humanity, and Cromwell slaughtered them. I tell you this: three hundred women, the grace and beauty and virtue of Wexford, were slaughtered by the English ruffians—sacred heaven!’ He went on then to assure his hearers that ‘the ruffianly Saxon paper, the *Times*, in the number received by me to-day, presumes to threaten us again with such a scene.’ One would like to see the copy of the *Times* which contained such a threat, or indeed any words that could be tortured into a semblance of any such hideous meaning. But the great agitator, when he found that he had excited enough the horror of his audience, proceeded to reassure them by the means of all others most objectionable and dangerous at such a time. ‘I am not imaginative,’ he said, ‘when I talk of the possibility of such scenes anew; but yet I assert that there is no danger to our women now, for the men of Ireland would die to the last in their defence.’ Here the whole meeting broke into a storm of impassioned cheering. ‘Ay,’ the orator exclaimed, when the storm found a momentary hush, ‘we were a paltry remnant then; we are millions now.’ At Mullaghmast, O’Connell made an impassioned allusion to the massacre of Irish chieftains, said to have taken place on that very spot in the



reign of Queen Elizabeth. 'Three hundred and ninety Irish chiefs perished here! They came, confiding in Saxon honour, relying on the protection of the Queen, to a friendly conference. In the midst of revelry, in the cheerful light of the banquet house, they were surrounded and butchered. None returned save one. Their wives were widows, their children fatherless. In their homesteads was heard the shrill shriek of despair—the cry of bitter agony. Oh, Saxon cruelty, how it cheers my heart to think that you dare not attempt such a deed again!' It is not necessary to point out what the effect of such descriptions and such allusions must have been upon an excitable and an ignorant peasant audience—on men who were ready to believe in all sincerity that England only wanted the opportunity to re-enact in the reign of Queen Victoria the scenes of Elizabeth's or Cromwell's day.

The late Lord Lytton has given, in his poem 'St. Stephens,' a picturesque description of one of these meetings, and of the effect produced upon himself by O'Connell's eloquence. 'Once to my sight,' he says, 'the giant thus was given; walled by wide air and roofed by boundless heaven.' He describes 'the human ocean' lying spread out at the giant's feet; its 'wave on wave' flowing 'into space away.' Not unnaturally, Lord Lytton thought 'no clarion could have sent its sound even to the centre' of that crowd.

And as I thought, rose the sonorous swell  
As from some church tower swings the silvery ball;  
Aloft and clear from airy tide to tide,  
It glided easy as a bird may glide.

To the last verge of that vast audience sent,  
It played with each wild passion as it went ;  
Now stirred the uproar—now the murmur stilled,  
And sobs or laughter answered as it willed.  
Then did I know what spells of infinite choice  
To rouse or lull has the sweet human voice.  
Then did I learn to seize the sudden clue  
To the grand troublous life antique—to view,  
Under the rock-stand of Demosthenes,  
Unstable Athens heave her noisy seas.

The crowds who attended the monster meetings came in a sort of military order and with a certain parade of military discipline. At the meeting held on the Hill of Tara, where O'Connell stood beside the stone said to have been used for the coronation of the ancient monarchs of Ireland, it is declared on the authority of careful and unsympathetic witnesses that a quarter of a million of people must have been present. The Government naturally felt that there was a very considerable danger in the massing together of such vast crowds of men in something like military array and under the absolute leadership of one man, who openly avowed that he had called them together to show England what was the strength her statesmen would have to fear if they continued to deny Repeal to his demand. It is certain now that O'Connell did not at any time mean to employ force for the attainment of his ends. But it is equally certain that he wished the English Government to see that he had the command of an immense number of men, and probably even to believe that he would, if needs were, hurl them in rebellion upon England if ever she should be embarrassed with a foreign war. It is

certain, too, that many of O'Connell's most ardent admirers, especially among the young men, were fully convinced that some day or other their leader would call on them to fight, and were much disappointed when they found that he had no such intention. The Government at last resolved to interfere. A meeting was announced to be held at Clontarf on Sunday, October 8, 1843. Clontarf is near Dublin, and is famous in Irish history as the scene of a great victory of the Irish over their Danish invaders. It was intended that this meeting should surpass in numbers and in earnestness the assemblage at Tara. On the very day before the eighth the Lord Lieutenant issued a proclamation prohibiting the meeting as 'calculated to excite reasonable and well-grounded apprehension' in that its object was 'to accomplish alterations in the laws and constitution of the realm by intimidation and the demonstration of physical force.' O'Connell's power over the people was never shown more effectively than in the control which at that critical moment he was still able to exercise. The populations were already coming in to Clontarf in streams from all the country round when the proclamation of the Lord Lieutenant was issued. No doubt the Irish Government ran a terrible risk when they delayed so long the issue of their proclamation. With the people already assembling in such masses, the risk of a collision with the police and the soldiery, and of a consequent massacre, is something still shocking to contemplate. It is not surprising, perhaps, if O'Connell and many of his followers made it a charge against the

Government that they intended to bring about such a collision in order to make an example of some of the Repealers and thus strike terror through the country. Some sort of collision would almost undoubtedly have occurred but for the promptitude of O'Connell himself. He at once issued a proclamation of his own to which the populations were likely to pay far more attention than they would to anything coming from Dublin Castle. O'Connell declared that the orders of the Lord Lieutenant must be obeyed; that the meeting must not take place; and that the people must return to their homes. The 'uncrowned king,' as some of his admirers loved to call him, was obeyed, and no meeting was held.

From that moment, however, the great power of the Repeal agitation was gone. The Government had accomplished far more by their proclamation than they could possibly have imagined at the time. They had without knowing it compelled O'Connell to show his hand. It was now made clear that he did not intend to have resort to force. From that hour there was virtually a schism between the elder Repealers and the younger. The young and fiery followers of the great agitator lost all faith in him. It would in any case have been impossible to maintain for any very long time the state of national tension in which Ireland had been kept. It must soon come either to a climax or to an anti-climax. It came to an anti-climax. All the imposing demonstrations of physical strength lost their value when it was made positively known that they were only demonstrations,

and that nothing was ever to come of them. The eye of an attentive foreigner was then fixed on Ireland and on O'Connell; the eye of one destined to play a part in the political history of our time which none other has surpassed. Count Cavour had not long returned to his own country from a visit made with the express purpose of studying the politics and the general condition of England and Ireland. He wrote to a friend about the crisis then passing in Ireland. 'When one is at a distance,' he said, 'from the theatre of events, it is easy to make prophecies which have already been contradicted by facts. But according to my view O'Connell's fate is sealed. On the first vigorous demonstration of his opponents he has drawn back; from that moment he has ceased to be dangerous.' Cavour was perfectly right. It was never again possible to bring the Irish people up to the pitch of enthusiasm which O'Connell had wrought them to before the suppression of the Clontarf meeting; and before long the Irish national movement had split in two.

The Government at once proceeded to the prosecution of O'Connell and some of his principal associates. Daniel O'Connell himself, his son John, the late Sir John Gray, and Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, were the most conspicuous of those against whom the prosecution was directed. They were charged with conspiring to raise and excite disaffection among her Majesty's subjects, to excite them to hatred and contempt of the Government and Constitution of the realm. The trial was in many ways a singularly

unfortunate proceeding. The Government prosecutor objected to all the Catholics whose names were called as jurors. An error of the sheriffs in the construction of the jury-lists had already reduced by a considerable number the roll of Catholics entitled to serve on juries. It therefore happened that the greatest of Irish Catholics, the representative Catholic of his day, the principal agent in the work of carrying Catholic Emancipation, was tried by a jury composed exclusively of Protestants. It has only to be added that this was done in the metropolis of a country essentially Catholic; a country five-sixths of whose people were Catholics; and on a question affecting indirectly, if not directly, the whole position and claims of Catholics. The trial was long. O'Connell defended himself; and his speech was universally regarded as wanting the power that had made his defence of others so effective in former days. It was for the most part a sober and somewhat heavy argument to prove that Ireland had lost instead of gained by her union with England. The jury found O'Connell guilty along with most of his associates, and he was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment and a fine of 2,000*l*. The others received lighter sentences. O'Connell appealed to the House of Lords against the sentence. In the meantime he issued a proclamation to the Irish people commanding them to keep perfectly quiet and not to commit any offence against the law. 'Every man,' said one of his proclamations, 'who is guilty of the slightest breach of the peace is an enemy of me and of Ireland.' The Irish

people took him at his word and remained perfectly quiet.

O'Connell and his principal associates were committed to Richmond Prison, in Dublin. The trial had been delayed in various ways, and the sentence was not pronounced until May 24, 1844. The appeal to the House of Lords—we may pass over intermediate stages of procedure—was heard in the following September. Five law lords were present. The Lord Chancellor (Lord Lyndhurst) and Lord Brougham were of opinion that the sentence of the court below should be affirmed. Lord Denman, Lord Cottenham, and Lord Campbell were of the opposite opinion. Lord Denman, in particular, condemned the manner in which the jury-lists had been prepared. Some of his words on the occasion became memorable, and passed into a sort of proverbial expression. Such practices, he said, would make of the law 'a mockery, a delusion and a snare.' A strange and memorable scene followed. The constitution of the House of Lords then and for long after made no difference between law lords and others in voting on a question of appeal. As a matter of practice and of fairness the lay peers hardly ever interfered in the voting on an appeal. But they had an undoubted right to do so; and it is even certain that in one or two peculiar cases they had exercised the right. If the lay lords were to vote in this instance, the fate of O'Connell and his companions could not be doubtful. O'Connell had always been the bitter enemy of the House of Lords. He had vehemently denounced its

authority, its practices, and its leading members. Nor if the lay peers had voted and confirmed the judgment of the court below, could it have been positively said that an injustice was done by their interference. The majority of the judges on the writ of error had approved the judgment of the court below. In the House of Lords itself the Lord Chancellor and Lord Brougham were of opinion that the judgment ought to be sustained. There would, therefore, have been some ground for maintaining that the substantial justice of the case had been met by the action of the lay peers. On the other hand, it would have afforded a ground for a positive outcry in Ireland if a question purely of law had been decided by the votes of lay peers against their bitter enemy. One peer, Lord Wharncliffe, made a timely appeal to the better judgment and feeling of his brethren. He urged them not to take a course which might allow anyone to say that political or personal feeling had prevailed in a judicial decision of the House of Lords. The appeal had its effect. A moment before one lay peer at least had openly declared that he would insist on his right to vote. When the Lord Chancellor was about to put the question in the first instance, to ascertain in the usual way whether a division would be necessary, several lay peers seemed as if they were determined to vote. But the appeal of Lord Wharncliffe settled the matter. All the lay peers at once withdrew and left the matter according to the usual course in the hands of the law lords. The majority of these being against the judgment of the court below, it was



accordingly reversed, and O'Connell and his associates were set at liberty. The propriety of a lay peer voting on a question of judicial appeal was never raised again so long as the appellate jurisdiction of the House of Lords was still exercised in the old and now obsolete fashion.

Nothing could well have been more satisfactory and more fortunate in its results than the conduct of the House of Lords. The effect upon the mind of the Irish people would have been deplorable if it had been seen that O'Connell was convicted by a jury on which there were no Roman Catholics, and that the sentence was confirmed, not by a judicial, but by a strictly political vote of the House of Lords. As it was, the influence of the decision, which proved that even in the assembly most bitterly denounced by O'Connell he could receive fair play, was in the highest degree satisfactory. It cannot be doubted that it did something to weaken the force of O'Connell's own denunciations of Saxon treachery and wrong-doing. The influence of O'Connell was never the same after the trial. Many causes combined to bring about this result. Most writers ascribe it above all to the trial itself, and the evidence it afforded that the English Government were strong enough to prosecute and punish even O'Connell if he provoked them too far. It is somewhat surprising to find intelligent men like Mr. Green, the author of 'A Short History of the English People,' countenancing such a belief. If the House of Lords had, by the votes of the lay peers, confirmed the sentence on

O'Connell, he would have come out of his prison at the expiration of his period of sentence more popular and more powerful than ever. Had his strength and faculty of agitation lasted, he might have agitated thenceforth with more effect than ever. If the Clontarf meeting had not disclosed to a large section of his followers that his policy after all was only to be one of talk, he might have come out of prison just the man he had been, the leader of all classes of Catholics and Nationalists. But the real blow given to O'Connell's popularity was given by O'Connell himself. The moment it was made clear that nothing was to be done but agitate, and that all the monster meetings, the crowds and banners and bands of music, the marshalling and marching and reviewing, meant nothing more than Father Mathew's temperance meetings meant—that moment all the youth of the movement fell off from O'Connell. The young men were very silly, as after events proved. O'Connell was far more wise, and had an infinitely better estimate of the strength of England than they had. But it is certain that the young men were disgusted with the kind of gigantic sham which the great agitator seemed to have been conducting for so long a time. It would have been impossible to keep up for ever such an excitement as that which got together the monster meetings. Such heat cannot be brought up to the burning point and kept there at will. A reaction was inevitable. O'Connell was getting old, and had lived a life of work and wear and tear enough to break down even his constitution

of iron. He had kept a great part of his own followers in heart, as he had kept the Government in alarm, by leaving it doubtful whether he would not in the end make an appeal to the reserve of physical force which he so often boasted of having at his back. When the whole secret was out, he ceased to be an object of fear to the one, and of enthusiasm to the other. It was neither the Lord Lieutenant's proclamation nor the prosecution by the Government that impaired the influence of O'Connell. It was O'Connell's own proclamation declaring for submission to the law that dethroned him. From that moment the political monarch had to dispute with rebels for his crown; and the crown fell off in the struggle, like that which Uhland tells of in the pretty poem.

For the Clontarf meeting had been the climax. There was all manner of national rejoicing when the decision of the House of Lords set O'Connell and his fellow-prisoners free. There were illuminations and banquets and meetings and triumphal processions, renewed declarations of allegiance to the great leader, and renewed protestations on his part that Repeal was coming. But his reign was over. His death may as well be recorded here as later. His health broke down; and the disputes in which he became engaged with the Young Irelanders, dividing his party into two hostile camps, were a grievous burthen to him. In Lord Beaconsfield's *Life of Lord George Bentinck*, a very touching description is given of the last speech made by O'Connell in Parliament. It was on April 3, 1846: 'His appearance,' says Mr. Disraeli, 'was of

great debility, and the tones of his voice were very still. His words indeed only reached those who were immediately around him, and the Ministers sitting on the other side of the green table, and listening with that interest and respectful attention which became the occasion.' O'Connell spoke for nearly two hours. 'It was a strange and touching spectacle to those who remembered the form of colossal energy and the clear and thrilling tones that had once startled, disturbed and controlled senates. . . . To the House generally it was a performance in dumb show: a feeble old man muttering before a table; but respect for the great Parliamentary personage kept all as orderly as if the fortunes of a party hung upon his rhetoric; and though not an accent reached the gallery, means were taken that next morning the country should not lose the last and not the least interesting of the speeches of one who had so long occupied and agitated the mind of nations.'

O'Connell became seized with a profound melancholy. Only one desire seemed left to him, the desire to close his stormy career in Rome. The Eternal City is the capital, the shrine, the Mecca of the Church to which O'Connell was undoubtedly devoted with all his heart. He longed to lie down in the shadow of the dome of St. Peter's and rest there, and there die. His youth had been wild in more ways than one, and he had long been under the influence of a profound penitence. He had killed a man in a duel, and was through all his after life haunted by regret for the deed, although it was really forced

on him, and he had acted only as any other man of his time would have acted in such conditions. But now in his old and sinking days all the errors of his youth and his strong manhood came back upon him, and he longed to steep the painful memories in the sacred influences of Rome. He hurried to Italy at a time when the prospect of the famine darkening down upon his country cast an additional shadow across his outward path. He reached Genoa, and he went no farther. His strength wholly failed him there, and he died, still far from Rome, on May 15, 1847. The close of his career was a mournful collapse; it was like the sudden crumbling in of some stately and commanding tower. The other day, it seemed, he filled a space of almost unequalled breadth and height in the political landscape; and now he is already gone. 'Even with a thought the rack dislimbs, and makes it indistinct, as water is in water.'

## CHAPTER XIII.

## PEEL'S ADMINISTRATION.

SOME important steps in the progress of what may be described as social legislation are part of the history of Peel's Government. The Act of Parliament which prohibited absolutely the employment of women and girls in mines and collieries was rendered unavoidable by the fearful exposures made through the instrumentality of a Commission appointed to inquire into the whole subject. This Commission was appointed on the motion of the then Lord Ashley, since better known as the Earl of Shaftesbury, a man who during the whole of a long career has always devoted himself—sometimes wisely and successfully, sometimes indiscreetly and to little purpose, always with disinterested and benevolent intention—to the task of brightening the lives and lightening the burthens of the working classes and the poor. The Commission found many hideous evils arising from the employment of women and girls under ground, and Lord Ashley made such effective use of their disclosures that he encountered very little opposition when he came to propose restrictive legislation. In some of the coal mines women were literally employed as beasts of burden. Where the seam of coal was too

narrow to allow them to stand upright, they had to crawl back and forward on all fours for fourteen or sixteen hours a day dragging the trucks laden with coals. The trucks were generally fastened to a chain which passed between the legs of the unfortunate women, and was then connected with a belt which was strapped round their naked waists. Their only clothing often consisted of an old pair of trousers made of sacking ; and they were uncovered from the waist up—uncovered, that is to say, except for the grime and filth that collected and clotted around them. All manner of hideous diseases were generated in these unsexed bodies. Unsexed almost literally some of them became ; for their chests were often hard and flat as those of men ; and not a few of them lost all reproductive power : a happy condition truly under the circumstances, where women who bore children only went up to the higher air for a week during their confinement, and were then back at their work again. It would be superfluous to say that the immorality engendered by such a state of things was in exact keeping with the other evils which it brought about. Lord Ashley had the happiness and the honour of putting a stop to this infamous sort of labour for ever by the Act of 1842, which declared that, after a certain limited period, no woman or girl whatever should be employed in mines and collieries.

Lord Ashley was less completely successful in his endeavour to secure a ten 'hours' limitation for the daily labour of women and young persons in factories. By a vigorous annual agitation on the general

subject of factory labour, in which Lord Ashley had followed in the footsteps of Mr. Michael Thomas Sadler, he brought the Government up to the point of undertaking legislation on the subject. They first introduced a bill which combined a limitation of the labour of children in factories with a plan for compulsory education among the children. The educational clauses of the bill had to be abandoned in consequence of a somewhat narrow-minded opposition among the Dissenters, who feared that too much advantage was given to the Church. Afterwards the Government brought in another bill, which became in the end the Factories Act of 1844. It was during the passing of this measure that Lord Ashley tried unsuccessfully to introduce his ten hours' limit. The bill diminished the working hours of children under thirteen years of age, and fixed them at six and a half hours each day; extended somewhat the time during which they were to be under daily instruction, and did a good many other useful and wholesome things. The principle of legislative interference to protect youthful workers in factories had been already established by the Act of 1833; and Lord Ashley's agitation only obtained for it a somewhat extended application. It has since that time again and again received further extension; and in this time, as in the former, there is a constant controversy going on as to whether its principles ought not to be so extended as to guard in almost every way the labour of adult women, and even of adult men. The controversy during Lord Ashley's agitation was always warm and



often impassioned. Many thoroughly benevolent men and women could not bring themselves to believe that any satisfactory and permanent results could come of a legislative interference with what might be called the freedom of contract between employers and employed. They argued that it was idle to say the interference was only made or sought in the case of women and boys ; for if the women and boys stop off working, they pointed out, the men must perforce in most cases stop off working too. Some of the public men afterwards most justly popular among the English artisan classes were opposed to the measure on the ground that it was a heedless attempt to interfere with fixed economic laws. It was urged too, and with much semblance of justice, that the interference of the State for the protection or the compulsory education of children in factories would have been much better employed, and was far more loudly called for, in the case of the children employed in agricultural labour. The lot of a factory child, it was contended, is infinitely better in most respects than that of the poor little creature who is employed in holloaing at the crows on a farm. The mill-hand is well cared for, well paid, well able to care for himself and his wife and his family, it was argued ; but what of the miserable Giles Scroggins of Dorsetshire or Somersetshire, who never has more in all his life than just enough to keep body and soul together ; and for whom, at the close, the workhouse is the only haven of rest ? Why not legislate for him—at least for his wife and children ?

Neither point requires much consideration from us at present. We have to recognise historical facts; and it is certain that this country has made up its mind that for the present and for a long time to come Parliament will interfere in whatever way seems good to it with the conditions on which labour is carried on. There has been indeed a very marked advance or retrogression, whichever men may please to call it, in public opinion since the ten hours' agitation. At that time compulsory education and the principles of Mr. Gladstone's Irish Land Act would have seemed alike impossible to most persons in this country. The practical mind of the Englishman carries to an extreme the dislike and contempt for what the French call *les principes* in politics. Therefore we oscillate a good deal, the pendulum swinging now very far in the direction of non-interference with individual action, and now still farther in the direction of universal interference and regulation—what was once humorously described as grandmotherly legislation. With our recent experiences we can only be surprised that a few years ago there was such a repugnance to the modest amount of interference with individual rights which Lord Ashley's extremest proposals would have sought to introduce. As regards the other point it is certain that Parliament will at one time or another do for the children in the fields something very like that which it has done for the children in the factories. It is enough for us to know that practically the factory legislation has worked very well; and that the non-interference in

the fields is a far heavier responsibility on the conscience of Parliament than interference in the factories.

Many other things done by Sir Robert Peel's Government aroused bitter controversy and agitation. In one or two remarkable instances the ministerial policy went near to producing that discord in the Conservative party which we shall presently see break out into passion and schism when Peel came to deal with the Corn Laws. There was, for example, the grant to the Roman Catholic College of Maynooth, a College for the education specially of young men who sought to enter the ranks of the priesthood. The grant was not a new thing. Since before the Act of Union a grant had been made for the college. The Government of Sir Robert Peel only proposed to make that which was insufficient sufficient; to enable the college to be kept in repair and to accomplish the purpose for which it was founded. As Macaulay put it, there was no more question of principle involved than there would be in the sacrifice of a pound instead of a pennyweight on some particular altar. Yet the ministerial proposition called up a very tempest of clamorous bigotry all over the country. What Macaulay described in fierce scorn as 'the bray of Exeter Hall' was heard resounding every day and night. Peel carried his measure, although nearly half his own party in the House of Commons voted against it on the second reading. The whole controversy has little interest now. Perhaps it will be found to live in the memory of many persons, chiefly because of the quarrel it caused

between Macaulay and his Edinburgh constituents, and of the annual motion for the withdrawal of the grant which was so long afterwards one of the regular bores of the House of Commons. Many of us can well remember the venerable form of the late Mr. Spooner as year after year he addressed an apathetic, scanty and half-amused audience, pottering over his papers by the light of two candles specially placed for his convenience on the table in front of the Speaker, and endeavouring in vain to arouse England to serious attention on the subject of the awful fate she was preparing for herself by her toleration of the principles of Rome. The Maynooth grant was abolished indeed not long after Mr. Spooner's death; but the manner of its abolition would have given him less comfort even than its introduction. It was abolished when Mr. Gladstone's Government abolished the State Church in Ireland.

Another of Peel's measures which aroused much clamour on both sides was that for the establishment of what were afterwards called the 'godless colleges' in Ireland. O'Connell has often had the credit of applying this nickname to the new colleges; but it was in fact from the extremest of all no-popery men, Sir Robert Harry Inglis, that the expression came. It was indeed from Sir Robert Inglis's side that the first note sounded of opposition to the scheme, although O'Connell afterwards took it vigorously up, and the Pope and the Irish bishops condemned the colleges.

There was objection within the Ministry, as well

as without. Mr. Gladstone, who had been doing admirable work, first as Vice-President, and afterwards as President, of the Board of Trade, resigned his office because of the Irish schemes. He acted, perhaps, with a too sensitive chivalry. He had written a work, as all the world knows, on the relations of Church and State, and he did not think the views expressed in that book left him free to co-operate in the ministerial measure. Some staid politicians were shocked, many more smiled, not a few sneered. The public in general applauded the spirit of disinterestedness which dictated the young statesman's act. .

The proposal of the Government was to establish in Ireland three colleges, one in Cork, the second in Belfast, and the third in Galway, and to affiliate these to a new university to be called the 'Queen's University in Ireland.' The teaching in these colleges was to be purely secular. Nothing could be more admirable than the intentions of Peel and his colleagues. Nor could it be denied that there might have been good seeming hope for a plan which thus proposed to open a sort of neutral ground in the educational controversy. But from both sides of the House and from the extreme party in each Church came an equally fierce denunciation of the proposal to separate secular from religious education. Nor surely could the claim of the Irish Catholics be said even by the warmest advocate of undenominational education to have no reason on its side. The small minority of Protestants in Ireland had their college and their university established as a distinctively Pro-

testant institution. Why should not the great majority who were Catholics ask for something of the same kind for themselves? Peel carried his measure; but the controversy has gone on ever since, and we have yet to see whether the scheme is a success or a failure.

One small instalment of justice to a much injured and long suffering religious body was accomplished without any trouble by Sir Robert Peel's Government. This was the bill for removing the test by which Jews were excluded from certain municipal offices. A Jew might be high sheriff of a county, or Sheriff of London, but with an inconsistency which was as ridiculous as it was narrow-minded, he was prevented from becoming a mayor, an alderman, or even a member of the Common Council. The oath which had to be taken included the words 'on the true faith of a Christian.' Lord Lyndhurst, the Lord Chancellor, introduced a measure to get rid of this absurd anomaly; and the House of Lords, who had firmly rejected similar proposals of relief before, passed it without any difficulty. It was of course passed by the House of Commons, which had done its best to introduce the reform in previous sessions, and without success.

The Bank Charter Act, separating the issue from the banking department of the Bank of England, limiting the issue of notes to a fixed amount of securities, and requiring the whole of the further circulation to be on a basis of bullion, and prohibiting the formation of any new banks of issue, is a characteristic and an important measure of Peel's Government.

To Peel, too, we owe the establishment of the income tax on its present basis—a doubtful boon. The copy-right question was at least advanced a stage. Railways were regulated. The railway mania and railway panic also belong to this active period. The country went wild with railway speculation. The South Sea scheme was hardly more of a bubble or hardly burst more suddenly or disastrously. The vulgar and flashy successes of one or two lucky adventurers turned the heads of the whole community. For a time it seemed to be a national article of faith that the capacity of the country to absorb new railway schemes and make them profitable was unlimited, and that to make a fortune one had only to take shares in anything.

An odd feature of the time was the outbreak of what were called the Rebecca riots in Wales. These riots arose out of the anger and impatience of the people at the great increase of toll-bars and tolls on the public roads. Some one, it was supposed, had hit upon a passage in Genesis which supplies a motto for their grievance and their complaint. ‘And they blessed Rebekah and said unto her . . . let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.’ They set about accordingly to possess very effectually the gates of those which hated them. Mobs assembled every night, destroyed turnpikes, and dispersed. They met with little molestation in most cases for a while. The mobs were always led by a man in woman’s clothes, supposed to represent the typical Rebecca. As the disturbances went on, it was found that no easier mode of disguise could be got than

a woman's clothes, and therefore in many of the riots petticoats might almost be said to be the uniform of the insurgent force. Night after night for months these midnight musterings took place. Rebecca and her daughters became the terror of many regions. As the work went on it became more serious. Rebecca and her daughters grew bold. There were conflicts with the police and with the soldiers. It is to be feared that men and even women died for Rebecca. At last the Government succeeded in putting down the riots, and had the wisdom to appoint a Commission to inquire into the cause of so much disturbance; and the Commission, as will readily be imagined, found that there were genuine grievances at the bottom of the popular excitement. The farmers and the labourers were poor; the tolls were seriously oppressive. The Government dealt lightly with most of the rioters who had been captured, and introduced measures which removed the grievances most seriously complained of. Rebecca and her daughters were heard of no more. They had made out their case, and done in their wild mumming way something of a good work. Only a short time before the rioters would have been shot down and the grievances would have been allowed to stand. Rebecca and her short career mark an advancement in the political and social history of England.

Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary, brought himself and the Government into some trouble by the manner in which he made use of the power invested in the Administration for the opening of private letters.



Mr. Duncombe, the Radical member for Finsbury, presented a petition from Joseph Mazzini and others complaining that letters addressed to them had been opened in the Post Office. Many of Mazzini's friends, and perhaps Mazzini himself, believed that the contents of these letters had been communicated to the Sardinian and Austrian Governments, and that as a result men who were supposed to be implicated in projects of insurrection on the Continent had actually been arrested and put to death. Sir James Graham did not deny that he had issued a warrant authorising the opening of some of Mazzini's letters; but he contended that the right to open letters had been specially reserved to the Government on its responsibility, that it had been always exercised, but by him with special caution and moderation; and that it would be impossible for any Government absolutely to deprive itself of such a right. The public excitement was at first very great; but it soon subsided. The reports of Parliamentary committees appointed by the two Houses showed that all governments had exercised the right, but naturally with decreasing frequency and greater caution of late years; and that there was no chance now of its being seriously abused. No one, not even Thomas Carlyle, who had written to the *Times* in generous indignation at the opening of Mazzini's letters, went so far as to say that such a right should never be exercised. Carlyle admitted that he would tolerate the practice 'when some new Gunpowder Plot may be in the wind, some double-dyed high treason or imminent national wreck not avoidable

otherwise.' In the particular case of Mazzini it seemed an odious trick, and everyone was ashamed of it. Such a feeling was the surest guard against abuse for the future, and the matter was allowed to drop. The minister is to be pitied who is compelled even by legitimate necessity to have recourse to such an expedient; he would be despised now by every decent man if he turned to it without such justification. Many years had to pass away before Sir James Graham was free from innuendoes and attacks on the ground that he had tampered with the correspondence of an exile. One remark, on the other hand, it is right to make. An exile is sheltered in a country like England on the assumption that he does not involve her in responsibility and danger by using her protection as a shield behind which to contrive plots and organise insurrections against foreign governments. It is certain that Mazzini did make use of the shelter England gave him for such a purpose. It would in the end be to the heavy injury of all fugitives from despotic rule if to shelter them brought such consequences on the countries that offered them a home.

The Peel Administration was made memorable by many remarkable events at home as well as abroad. It had, as we have seen, inherited wars and brought them to a close: it had wars of its own. Scinde was annexed by Lord Ellenborough in consequence of the disputes which had arisen between us and the Ameers, whom we accused of having broken faith with us. They were said to be in correspondence with our

enemies, which may possibly have been true, and to have failed to pay up our tribute, which was very likely. Anyhow we found occasion for an attack on Scinde ; and the result was the total defeat of the Princes and their army, and the annexation of the territory. Sir Charles Napier won a splendid victory—splendid, that is, in a military sense—over an enemy outnumbering him by more than twelve to one at the battle of Meeanee ; and Scinde was ours. Peel and his colleagues accepted the annexation. None of them liked it ; but none saw how it could be undone. There was nothing to be proud of in the matter, except the courage of our soldiers, and the genius of Sir Charles Napier, one of the most brilliant, daring, successful, eccentric, and self-conceited captains who had ever fought in the service of England since the days of Peterborough. Later on the Sikhs invaded our territory by crossing the Sutlej in great force. Sir Hugh Gough, afterwards Lord Gough, fought several fierce battles with them before he could conquer them ; and even then they were only conquered for the time.

We were at one moment apparently on the very verge of what must have proved a far more serious war much nearer home, in consequence of the dispute that arose between this country and France about Tahiti and Queen Pomare. Queen Pomare was sovereign of the island of Tahiti, in the South Pacific, the Otaheite of Captain Cook. She was a pupil of some of our missionaries, and was very friendly to England and its people. She had been induced or compelled to put her-

self and her dominion under the protection of France; a step which was highly displeasing to her subjects. Some ill-feeling towards the French residents of the island was shown; and the French admiral, who had induced or compelled the queen to put herself under French protection, now suddenly appeared off the coast, and called on her to hoist the French flag above her own. She refused; and he instantly effected a landing on the island, pulled down her flag, raised that of France in its place, and proclaimed that the island was French territory. The French admiral appears to have been a hot-headed, thoughtless sort of man, the Commodore Wilkes of his day. His act was at once disavowed by the French Government, and condemned in strong terms by M. Guizot. But Queen Pomare had appealed to the Queen of England for assistance. 'Do not cast me away, my friend,' she said; 'I run to you for refuge, to be covered under your great shadow, the same that afforded relief to my fathers by your fathers, who are now dead, and whose kingdoms have descended to us the weaker vessels.' A large party in France allowed themselves to become inflamed with the idea that British intrigue was at the bottom of the Tahiti people's dislike to the protectorate of France, and that England wanted to get Queen Pomare's dominions for herself. They cried out therefore that to take down the flag of France from its place in Tahiti would be to insult the dignity of the French nation, and to insult it at the instance of England. The cry was echoed in the shrillest tones by a great number of French news-

papers. Where the flag of France has once been hoisted, they screamed, it must never be taken down ; which is about equivalent to saying that if a man's officious servant carries off the property of some one else, and gives it to his master, the master's dignity is lowered by his consenting to hand it back to its owner. In the face of this clamour the French Government, although they disavowed any share in the filibustering of their admiral, did not show themselves in great haste to undo what he had done. Possibly they found themselves in something of the same difficulty as the English Government in regard to the annexation of Scinde. They could not perhaps with great safety to themselves have ventured to be honest all at once ; and in any case they did not want to give up the protectorate of Tahiti. While the more hot-headed on both sides of the English Channel were thus snarling at each other, the difficulty was immensely complicated by the seizure of a missionary named Pritchard, who had been our consul in the island up to the deposition of Pomare. A French sentinel had been attacked, or was said to have been attacked, in the night, and in consequence the French commandant seized Pritchard in reprisal, declaring him to be 'the only mover and instigator of disturbances among the natives.' Pritchard was flung into prison, and only released to be expelled from the island. He came home to England with his story ; and his arrival was the signal for an outburst of indignation all over the country. Sir Robert Peel and Lord Aberdeen alike stigmatised the treatment

of Pritchard as a gross and intolerable outrage ; and satisfaction was demanded of the French Government. The King and M. Guizot were both willing that full justice should be done, and both anxious to avoid any occasion of ill-feeling with England. The King had lately been receiving with effusive show of affection a visit from our Queen in France, and was about to return it. But so hot was popular passion on both sides, that it would have needed stronger and juster natures than those of the King and his minister to venture at once on doing the right thing. It was on the last day of the session of 1844, September 5, that Sir Robert Peel was able to announce that the French Government had agreed to compensate Pritchard for his sufferings and losses. Queen Pomare was nominally restored to power, but the French protection proved as stringent as if it were a sovereign rule. She might as well have pulled down her flag for all the sovereign right it secured to her. She died thirty-four years after, and her death recalled to the memory of the English public the long-forgotten fact that she had once so nearly been the cause of a war between England and France.

The Ashburton Treaty and the Oregon Treaty belong alike to the history of Peel's Administration. The Ashburton Treaty bears date August 9, 1842, and arranges finally the north-western boundary between the British Provinces of North America and the United States. For many years the want of any clear and settled understanding as to the boundary line between Canada and the State of Maine had been

a source of some disturbance, and of much controversy. Arbitration between England and the United States had been tried and failed, both parties declining the award. Sir Robert Peel sent out Lord Ashburton, formerly Mr. Baring, as plenipotentiary, to Washington, in 1842, and by his intelligent exertions an arrangement was come to which appears to have given mutual satisfaction ever since, despite of the sinister prophecies of Lord Palmerston at the time. The Oregon question was more complicated, and was the source of a longer controversy. More than once the dispute about the boundary line in the Oregon region had very nearly become an occasion for war between England and the United States. In Canning's time there was a crisis during which, to quote the words of an English statesman, war could have been brought about by the holding up of a finger. The question in dispute was as to the boundary line between English and American territory west of the Rocky Mountains. It had seemed a matter of little importance at one time when the country west of the Rocky Mountains was regarded by most persons as little better than a desert idle. But when the vast capacities and the splendid future of the Pacific slope began to be recognised, and the importance to us of some station and harbour there came to be more and more evident, the dispute naturally swelled into a question of vital interest to both nations. In 1818 an attempt at arrangement was made, but failed. The two governments then agreed to leave the disputed regions to joint occupation for ten years, after which

the subject was to be opened again. When the end of the first term came near, Canning did his best to bring about a settlement, but failed. The dispute involved the ownership of the mouth of the Columbia River, and of the noble island which bears the name of Vancouver, off the shore of British Columbia. The joint occupancy was renewed for an indefinite time; but in 1843, the President of the United States somewhat peremptorily called for a final settlement of the boundary. The question was eagerly taken up by excitable politicians in the American House of Representatives. For more than two years the Oregon question became a party cry in America. With a large proportion of the American public, including, of course, nearly all citizens of Irish birth or extraction, any President would have been popular beyond measure who had forced a war on England. Calmer and wiser counsels prevailed, however, on both sides. Lord Aberdeen, our Foreign Secretary, was especially moderate and conciliatory. He offered a compromise which was at last accepted. On June 15, 1846, the Oregon Treaty settled the question for that time at least; the dividing line was to be 'the forty-ninth degree of latitude, from the Rocky Mountains west to the middle of the channel separating Vancouver's Island from the mainland; thence southerly through the middle of the channel and of Fuca's Straits to the Pacific.' The channel and straits were to be free, as also the great northern branch of the Columbia River. In other words, Vancouver's Island remained to Great Britain, and the



free navigation of the Columbia River was secured. We have said that the question was settled, 'for that time'; because an important part of it came up again for settlement many years after. The commissioners appointed to determine that portion of the boundary which was to run southerly through the middle of the channel were unable to come to any agreement on the subject, and the divergence of the claims made on one side and the other constituted a new question, which became a part of the famous Treaty of Washington in 1871, and was finally settled by the arbitration of the Emperor of Germany. But it is much to the honour of the Peel Administration that a dispute which had for years been charged with possibilities of war, and had become a stock subject of political agitation in America, should have been so far settled as to be removed for ever after out of the category of disputes which suggest an appeal to arms. This was one of the last acts of Peel's Government, and it was not the least of the great things he had done. We have soon to tell how it came about that it was one of his latest triumphs, and how an Administration which had come into power with such splendid promise, and had accomplished so much in such various fields of legislation, was brought so suddenly to a fall. The story is one of the most remarkable and important chapters in the history of English politics and parties.

During Peel's time we catch a last glimpse of the famous Arctic navigator, Sir John Franklin. He sailed on the expedition which was doomed to be his

last, on May 26, 1845, with his two vessels, *Erebus* and *Terror*. Not much more is heard of him as among the living. We may say of him as Carlyle says of La Pérouse, 'The brave navigator goes and returns not ; the seekers search far seas for him in vain ; only some mournful mysterious shadow of him hovers long in all heads and hearts.'

## CHAPTER XIV.

## FREE TRADE AND THE LEAGUE.

FEW chapters of political history in modern times have given occasion for more controversy than that which contains the story of Sir Robert Peel's Administration in its dealing with the Corn Laws. Told in the briefest form, the story is that Peel came into office in 1841 to maintain the Corn Laws, and that in 1846 he repealed them. The controversy as to the wisdom or unwisdom of repealing the Corn Laws has long since come to an end. They who were the uncompromising opponents of Free Trade at that time are proud to call themselves its uncompromising zealots now. Indeed, there is no more chance of a reaction against Free Trade in England than there is of a reaction against the rule of three. But the controversy still exists, and will probably always be in dispute, as to the conduct of Sir Robert Peel.

The Melbourne Ministry fell, as we have seen, in consequence of a direct vote of want of confidence moved by their leading opponent, and the return of a majority hostile to them at the general election that followed. The vote of want of confidence was levelled against their financial policy, especially against Lord John Russell's proposal to substitute a fixed duty of

eight shillings for Peel's sliding scale. Sir Robert Peel came into office, and he introduced a reorganised scheme of a sliding scale, reducing the duties and improving the system, but maintaining the principle. Lord John Russell proposed an amendment declaring that the House of Commons, 'considering the evils which have been caused by the present Corn Laws, and especially by the fluctuation of the graduated or sliding scale, is not prepared to adopt the measure of her Majesty's Government, which is founded on the same principles, and is likely to be attended by similar results.' The amendment was rejected by a large majority, no less than one hundred and twenty-three. But the question between Free Trade and Protection was even more distinctly raised. Mr. Villiers proposed another amendment declaring for the entire abolition of all duties on grain. Only ninety votes were given for the amendment, while three hundred and ninety-three were recorded against it. Sir Robert Peel's Government, therefore, came into power distinctly pledged to uphold the principle of protection for home-grown grain. Four years after this Sir Robert Peel proposed the total abolition of the corn duties. For this he was denounced by some members of his party in language more fierce and unmeasured than ever since has been applied to any leading statesman. Mr. Gladstone was never assailed by the staunchest supporter of the Irish Church in words so vituperative as those which rated Sir Robert Peel for his supposed apostacy. One eminent person at least made his first fame as a Parliamentary orator by his

denunciations of the great Minister whom he had previously eulogised and supported.

‘The history of agricultural distress,’ it has been well observed, ‘is the history of agricultural abundance.’ This looks at first sight a paradox; but nothing can in reality be more plain and less paradoxical. ‘Whenever,’ to follow out the passage, ‘Providence, through the blessing of genial seasons, fills the nation’s stores with plenteousness, then and then only has the cry of ruin to the cultivator been proclaimed as the one great evil for legislation to repress.’ This is indeed the very meaning of the principle of protection. When the commodity which the protected interest has to dispose of is so abundant as to be easily attained by the common body of consumers, then of course the protected interest is injured in its particular way of making money, and expects the State to do something to secure it in the principal advantage of its monopoly. The greater quantity of grain a good harvest brings for the benefit of all the people, the less the price the corn-grower can charge for it. His interest as a monopolist is always and inevitably opposed to the interest of the community.

But it is easy even now, when we have almost forgotten the days of protection, to see that the corn-grower is not likely either to recognise or to admit this conflict of interests between his protection and the public welfare. Apart from the natural tendency of every man to think that that which does him good must do good to the community, there was un-

doubtedly something very fascinating in the theory of protection. It had a charming give and take, live and let live, air about it. 'You give me a little more than the market price for my corn, and don't you see I shall be able to buy all the more of your cloth and tea and sugar, or to pay you the higher rent for your land?' Such a compact seems reasonable and tempting. Almost up to our own time the legislation of the country was in the hands of the classes who had more to do with the growing of corn and the ownership of land than with the making of cotton and the working of machinery. The great object of legislation and of social compacts of whatever kind seemed to be to keep the rents of the landowners and the prices of the farmers up to a comfortable standard. It is not particularly to the discredit of the landlords and the farmers that this was so. We have seen in later times how every class in succession has resisted the movement of the principle of free trade when it came to be applied to its own particular interests. The paper manufacturers liked it as little in 1860 as the landlords and farmers had done fifteen years earlier. When the cup comes to be commended to the lips of each interest in turn, we always find that it is received as a poisoned chalice, and taken with much shuddering and passionate protestation. The particular advantage possessed by vested interests in the Corn Laws was that for a long time the landlords possessed all the legislative power and all the *prestige* as well. There was a certain reverence and sanctity about the ownership of land, with its hereditary

descent and its patriarchal dignities, which the manufacture of paper could not pretend to claim.

If it really were true that the legitimate incomes or the legitimate influence of the landlord class in England went down in any way because of the repeal of the Corn Laws, it would have to be admitted that the landlords, like the aristocrats before the French Revolution, had done something themselves to encourage the growth of new and disturbing ideas. Before the Revolution, free thought and the equality and brotherhood of man were beginning to be pet doctrines among the French nobles and among their wives and daughters. It was the whim of the hour to talk Rousseau, and to affect indifference to rank and a general faith in a good time coming of equality and brotherhood. In something of the same fashion the aristocracy of England were for some time before the repeal of the Corn Laws illustrating a sort of revival of patriarchal ideas about the duties of property. The influence was stirring everywhere. Oxford was beginning to busy itself in the revival of the olden influence of the Church. The Young England party, as they were then called, were ardent to restore the good old days when the noble was the father of the poor and the chief of his neighbourhood. All manner of pretty whimsies were caught up with this ruling idea to give them an appearance of earnest purpose. The young landlord exhibited himself in the attitude of a protector, patron and friend to all his tenants. Doles were formally given at stated hours to all who would come for them to the castle gate.

Young noblemen played cricket with the peasants on their estate, and the Saturnian age was believed by a good many persons to be returning for the express benefit of Old, or rather of Young, England. There was something like a party being formed in Parliament for the realisation of Young England's idyllic purposes. It comprised among its numbers several more or less gifted youths of rank, who were full of enthusiasm and poetic aspirations and nonsense; and it had the encouragement and support of one man of genius, who had no natural connection with the English aristocracy, but who was afterwards destined to be the successful leader of the Conservative and aristocratic party; to be its saviour when it was all but down in the dust; to guide it to victory, and make it once more, for the time at least, supreme in the political life of the country. This brilliant champion of Conservatism has often spoken of the repeal of the Corn Laws as the fall of the landlord class in England. If the landlords fell, it must be said of them, as has been fairly said of many a dynasty, that they never deserved better on the whole than just at the time when the blow struck them down.

The famous Corn Law of 1815 was a copy of the Corn Law of 1670. The former measure imposed a duty on the importation of foreign grain which amounted to prohibition. Wheat might be exported upon the payment of one shilling per quarter customs duty; but importation was practically prohibited until the price of wheat had reached eighty shillings a quarter. The Corn Law of 1815 was hurried



through Parliament, absolutely closing the ports against the importation of foreign grain until the price of our home-grown grain had reached the magic figure of eighty shillings a quarter. It was hurried through, despite the most earnest petitions from the commercial and manufacturing classes. A great deal of popular disturbance attended the passing of the measure. There were riots in London, and the houses of several of the supporters of the bill were attacked. Incendiary fires blazed in many parts of the country. In the Isle of Ely there were riots which lasted for two days and two nights, and the aid of the military had to be called in to suppress them. Five persons were hanged as the result of these disturbances. One might excuse a demagogue who compared the event to the suppression of some of the food riots in France just before the Revolution, of which we only read that the people—the poor, that is to say—turned out demanding bread, and the ringleaders were immediately hanged, and there was an end of the matter. After the Corn Law of 1815, thus ominously introduced, there were Sliding Scale Acts, having for their business to establish a varying system of duty, so that, according as the price of home-produced wheat rose to a certain height, the duty on imported wheat sank in proportion. The principle of all these measures was the same. It was founded on the assumption that the corn grew for the benefit of the grower first of all; and that until he had been secured in a handsome profit the public at large had no right to any reduction in the cost of food.

When the harvest was a good one, and the golden grain was plenty, then the soul of the grower was afraid, and he called out to Parliament to protect him against the calamity of having to sell his corn any cheaper than in years of famine. He did not see all the time that if the prosperity of the country in general was enhanced, he too must come to benefit by it.

Naturally it was in places like Manchester that the fallacy of all this theory was first commonly perceived and most warmly resented. The Manchester manufacturers saw that the customers for their goods were to be found in all parts of the world; and they knew that at every turn they were hampered in their dealings with the customers by the system of protective duties. They wanted to sell their goods wherever they could find buyers, and they chafed at any barrier between them and the sale. Manchester, from the time of its first having Parliamentary representation—only a few years before the foundation of the Anti-Corn Law League—had always spoken out for Free Trade. The fascinating sophism which had such charms for other communities, that by paying more than was actually necessary for everything all round, Dick enriched Tom, while Tom was at the same time enriching Dick, had no charms for the intelligence and the practical experience of Manchester. The close of the year 1836 was a period of stagnant trade and general depression; arising, in some parts of the country, to actual and severe suffering. Some members of Parliament and other influen-

tial men were stricken with the idea, which it does not seem to have required much strength of observation to foster, that it could not be for the advantage of the country in general to have the price of bread very high at a time when wages were very low and work was scarce. A movement against the Corn Laws began in London. An Anti-Corn Law Association on a small scale was formed. Its list of members bore the names of more than twenty members of Parliament, and for a time the society had a look of vigour about it. It came to nothing, however. London has never been found an effective nursery of agitation. It is too large to have any central interest or source of action. It is too dependent socially and economically on the patronage of the higher and wealthier classes. London has never been to England what Paris has been to France. It has hardly ever made or represented thoroughly the public opinion of England during any great crisis. A new centre of operations soon had to be sought, and various causes combined to make Lancashire the proper place. In the year 1838 the town of Bolton-le-Moors, in Lancashire, was the victim of a terrible commercial crisis. Thirty out of the fifty manufacturing establishments which the town contained were closed; nearly a fourth of all the houses of business were closed and actually deserted; and more than five thousand workmen were without homes or means of subsistence. All the intelligence and energy of Lancashire was roused. One obvious guarantee against starvation was cheap bread, and cheap bread meant

of course the abolition of the Corn Laws, for these laws were constructed on the principle that it was necessary to keep bread dear. A meeting was held in Manchester to consider measures necessary to be adopted for bringing about the complete repeal of these Laws. The Manchester Chamber of Commerce adopted a petition to Parliament against the Corn Laws. The Anti-Corn Law agitation had been fairly launched.

From that time it grew and grew in importance and strength. Meetings were held in various towns of England and Scotland. Associations were formed everywhere to co-operate with the movement which had its head-quarters in Manchester. In Newall's Buildings, Market Street, Manchester, the work of the League was really done for years. The leaders of the movement gave up their time day by day to its service. The League had to encounter a great deal of rather fierce opposition from the Chartists, who loudly proclaimed that the whole movement was only meant to entrap them once more into an alliance with the middle classes and the employers, as in the case of the Reform Bill, in order that when they had been made the cat's-paw again they might again be thrown contemptuously aside. On the other hand, the League had from the first the cordial co-operation of Daniel O'Connell, who became one of their principal orators when they held meetings in the metropolis. They issued pamphlets by hundreds of thousands, and sent lecturers all over the country explaining the principles of Free Trade. A gigantic propaganda of Free

Trade opinions was called into existence. Money was raised by the holding of bazaars in Manchester and in London, and by calling for subscriptions. A bazaar in Manchester brought in ten thousand pounds; one in London raised rather more than double that sum, not including the subscriptions that were contributed. A Free Trade Hall was built in Manchester. This building had an interesting history full of good omen for the cause. The ground on which the hall was erected was the property of Mr. Cobden, and was placed by him at the disposal of the League. That ground was the scene of what was known in Manchester as the Massacre of Peterloo. On August 16, 1819, a meeting of Manchester Reformers was held on that spot, which was dispersed by an attack of soldiers and militia, with the loss of many lives. The memory of that day rankled in the hearts of the Manchester Liberals for long after, and perhaps no better means could be found for purifying the ground from the stain and the shame of such bloodshed than its dedication by the modern apostle of peace and Free Trade as a site whereon to build a hall sacred to the promulgation of his favourite doctrines.

The times were peculiarly favourable to the new sort of propaganda which came into being with the Anti-Corn Law League. A few years before such an agitation would hardly have found the means of making its influence felt all over the country. The very reduction of the cost of postage alone must have facilitated its labours to an extent beyond calculation.

The inundation of the country with pamphlets, tracts, and reports of speeches would have been scarcely possible under the old system, and would in any case have swallowed up a far larger amount of money than even the League with its ample resources would have been able to supply. In all parts of the country railways were being opened, and these enabled the lecturers of the League to hasten from town to town and to keep the cause always alive in the popular mind. All these advantages and many others might, however, have proved of little avail if the League had not from the first been in the hands of men who seemed as if they came by special appointment to do its work. Great as the work was which the League did, it will be remembered in England almost as much because of the men who won the success as on account of the success itself.

The nominal leader of the Free Trade party in Parliament was for many years Mr. Charles Villiers, a man of aristocratic family and surroundings, of remarkable ability, and of the steadiest fidelity to the cause he had undertaken. Nothing is a more familiar phenomenon in the history of English political agitation than the aristocrat who assumes the popular cause and cries out for the 'rights' of the 'un-enfranchised millions.' But it was something new to find a man of Mr. Villiers' class devoting himself to a cause so entirely practical and business-like as that of the repeal of the Corn Laws. Mr. Villiers brought forward for several successive sessions in the House of Commons a motion in favour of the total repeal of

the Corn Laws. His eloquence and his argumentative power served the great purpose of drawing the attention of the country to the whole question, and making converts to the principle he advocated. The House of Commons has always of late years been the best platform from which to address the country. In political agitation it has thus been made to prepare the way for the schemes of legislation which it has itself always begun by reprobating. But Mr. Villiers might have gone on for all his life dividing the House of Commons on the question of Free Trade, without getting much nearer to his object, if it were not for the manner in which the cause was taken up by the country, and more particularly by the great manufacturing towns of the North. Until the passing of Lord Grey's Reform Bill these towns had no representation in Parliament. They seemed destined after that event to make up for their long exclusion from representative influence by taking the government of the country into their own hands. Of late years they have lost some of their relative influence. They have not now all the power that for no inconsiderable time they undoubtedly possessed. The reforms they chiefly aimed at have been carried, and the spirit which in times of stress and struggle kept their populations almost of one mind has less necessity of existence now. Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds are no whit less important to the life of the nation now than they were before Free Trade. But their supremacy does not exist now as it did then. At that time it was town against country; Manchester repre-

senting the town, and the whole Conservative (at one period almost the whole landowning) body representing the country. The Manchester school, as it was called, then and for long after had some teachers and leaders who were of themselves capable of making any school powerful and respected. With the Manchester school began a new kind of popular agitation. Up to that time agitation meant appeal to passion, and lived by provoking passion. Its cause might be good or bad, but the way of promoting it was the same. The Manchester school introduced the agitation which appealed to reason and argument only; which stirred men's hearts with figures of arithmetic, rather than figures of speech, and which converted mob meetings to political economy.

The real leader of the movement was Mr. Richard Cobden. Mr. Cobden was a man belonging to the yeoman class. He had received but a moderate education. His father dying while the great Free Trader was still young, Richard Cobden was taken in charge by an uncle, who had a wholesale warehouse in the City of London, and who gave him employment there. Cobden afterwards became a partner in a Manchester printed cotton factory; and he travelled occasionally on the commercial business of this establishment. He had a great liking for travel; but not by any means as the ordinary tourist travels; the interest of Cobden was not in scenery, or in art, or in ruins, but in men. He studied the condition of countries with a view to the manner in which it affected the men and women of the present, and



through them was likely to affect the future. On everything that he saw he turned a quick and intelligent eye; and he saw for himself and thought for himself. Wherever he went he wanted to learn something. He had in abundance that peculiar faculty which some great men of widely different stamp from him and from each other have possessed; of which Goethe frankly boasted, and which Mirabeau had more largely than he was always willing to acknowledge; the faculty which exacts from everyone with whom its owner comes into contact some contribution to his stock of information and to his advantage. Cobden could learn something from everybody. It is doubtful whether he ever came even into momentary acquaintance with anyone whom he did not compel to yield him something in the way of information. He travelled very widely for a time when travelling was more difficult work than it is at present. He made himself familiar with most of the countries of Europe, with many parts of the East, and what was then a rarer accomplishment, with the United States and Canada. He did not make the familiar grand tour and then dismiss the places he had seen from his active memory. He studied them and visited many of them again to compare early with later impressions. This was in itself an education of the highest value for the career he proposed to pursue. When he was about thirty years of age he began to acquire a certain reputation as the author of pamphlets directed against some of the pet doctrines of old-fashioned statesmanship; the balance of power in

Europe ; the necessity of maintaining a State Church in Ireland ; the importance of allowing no European quarrel to go on without England's intervention ; and similar dogmas. Mr. Cobden's opinions then were very much as they continued to the day of his death. He seemed to have come to the maturity of his convictions all at once, and to have passed through no further change either of growth or of decay. But whatever might be said then or now of the doctrines he maintained, there could be only one opinion as to the skill and force which upheld them with pen as well as tongue. The tongue, however, was his best weapon. If oratory were a business and not an art—that is, if its test were its success rather than its form—then it might be contended reasonably enough that Mr. Cobden was one of the greatest orators England has ever known. Nothing could exceed the persuasiveness of his style. His manner was simple, sweet and earnest. It was persuasive, but it had not the sort of persuasiveness which is merely a better kind of plausibility. It persuaded by convincing. It was transparently sincere. The light of its convictions shone all through it. It aimed at the reason and the judgment of the listener, and seemed to be convincing him to his own interest against his prejudices. Cobden's style was almost exclusively conversational, but he had a clear, well-toned voice with a quiet unassuming power in it which enabled him to make his words heard distinctly and without effort all through the great meetings he had often to address. His speeches were

full of variety. He illustrated every argument by something drawn from his personal observation or from reading, and his illustrations were always striking, appropriate and interesting. He had a large amount of bright and winning humour, and he spoke the simplest and purest English. He never used an unnecessary sentence or failed for a single moment to make his meaning clear. Many strong opponents of Mr. Cobden's opinions confessed even during his lifetime that they sometimes found with dismay their most cherished convictions crumbling away beneath his flow of easy argument. In the stormy times of national passion Mr. Cobden was less powerful. When the question was one to be settled by the rules that govern man's substantial interests, or even by the standing rules, if such an expression may be allowed, of morality, then Cobden was unequalled. So long as the controversy could be settled after this fashion—'I will show you that in such a course you are acting injuriously to your own interests;' or 'You are doing what a fair and just man ought not to do'—so long as argument of that kind could sway the conduct of men, then there was no one who could convince as Cobden could. But when the hour and mood of passion came, and a man or a nation said, 'I do not care any longer whether this is for my interest or not—I don't care whether you call it right or wrong—this way my instincts drive me, and this way I am going'—then Mr. Cobden's teaching, the very perfection as it was of common sense and fair play, was out of season. It could not answer feeling with

feeling. It was not able to 'overcrow,' in the word of Shakespeare and Spenser, one emotion by another. The defect of Mr. Cobden's style of mind and temper is fitly illustrated in the deficiency of his method of argument. His sort of education, his modes of observation, his way of turning travel to account, all went together to make him the man he was. The apostle of common sense and fair dealing, he had no sympathy with the passions of men; he did not understand them; they passed for nothing in his calculations. His judgment of men and of nations was based far too much on his knowledge of his own motives and character. He knew that in any given case he could always trust himself to act the part of a just and prudent man; and he assumed that all the world could be governed by the rules of prudence and of equity. History had little interest for him, except as it testified to man's advancement and steady progress, and furnished arguments to show that men prospered by liberty, peace and just dealings with their neighbours. He cared little or nothing for mere sentiments. Even where these had their root in some human tendency that was noble in itself, he did not reverence them if they seemed to stand in the way of men's acting peacefully and prudently. He did not see why the mere idea of nationality, for example, should induce people to disturb themselves by insurrections and wars, so long as they were tolerably well governed, and allowed to exist in peace and to make an honest living. Thus he never represented more than half the English character. He was always out

of sympathy with his countrymen on some great political question.

But he seemed as if he were designed by nature to conduct to success such an agitation as that against the Corn Laws. He found some colleagues who were worthy of him. His chief companion in the campaign was Mr. Bright. Mr. Bright's fame is not so completely bound up with the repeal of the Corn Laws, or even with the extension of the suffrage, as that of Mr. Cobden. If Mr. Bright had been on the wrong side of every cause he pleaded; if his agitation had been as conspicuous for failure as it was for success, he would still be famous among English public men. He was what Mr. Cobden was not, an orator of the very highest class. It is doubtful whether English public life has ever produced a man who possessed more of the qualifications of a great orator than Mr. Bright. He had a commanding presence; not indeed the stately and colossal form of O'Connell, but a massive figure, a large head, a handsome and expressive face. His voice was powerful, resonant, clear, with a peculiar vibration in it which lent unspeakable effect to any passages of pathos or of scorn. His style of speaking was exactly what a conventional demagogue's ought not to be. It was pure to austerity; it was stripped of all superfluous ornament. It never gushed or foamed. It never allowed itself to be mastered by passion. The first peculiarity that struck the listener was its superb self-restraint. The orator at his most powerful passages appeared as if he were rather keeping in his strength than taxing

it with effort. His voice was for the most part calm and measured ; he hardly ever indulged in much gesticulation. He never under the pressure of whatever emotion shouted or stormed. The fire of his eloquence was a white heat, intense, consuming, but never sparkling or sputtering. He had an admirable gift of humour and a keen ironical power. He had read few books, but of those he read he was a master. The English Bible and Milton were his chief studies. His style was probably formed for the most part on the Bible ; for although he may have moulded his general way of thinking and his simple strong morality on the lessons he found in Milton, his mere language bore little trace of Milton's stately classicism with its Hellenized and Latinized terminology, but was above all things Saxon and simple. Bright was a man of the middle class. His family were Quakers of a somewhat austere mould. They were manufacturers of carpets in Rochdale, Lancashire, and had made considerable money in their business. John Bright therefore was raised above the temptations which often beset the eloquent young man who takes up a democratic cause in a country like ours ; and as our public opinion goes it probably was to his advantage when first he made his appearance in Parliament that he was well known to be a man of some means, and not a clever and needy adventurer.

Mr. Bright himself has given an interesting account of his first meeting with Mr. Cobden:—

‘The first time I became acquainted with Mr. Cobden was in connection with the great question of

education. I went over to Manchester to call upon him and invite him to come to Rochdale to speak at a meeting about to be held in the school-room of the Baptist Chapel in West Street. I found him in his counting-house. I told him what I wanted; his countenance lighted up with pleasure to find that others were working in the same cause. He without hesitation agreed to come. He came and he spoke; and though he was then so young a speaker, yet the qualities of his speech were such as remained with him so long as he was able to speak at all—clearness, logic, a conversational eloquence, a persuasiveness which when combined with the absolute truth there was in his eye and in his countenance, became a power it was almost impossible to resist.’

Still more remarkable is the description Mr. Bright has given of Cobden’s first appeal to him to join in the agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws :—

‘I was in Leamington, and Mr. Cobden called on me. I was then in the depths of grief—I may almost say of despair, for the light and sunshine of my house had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life and a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called on me as his friend and addressed me, as you may suppose, with words of condolence. After a time he looked up and said: ‘There are thousands and thousands of homes in England at this moment where wives and mothers and children are dying of hunger. Now when the first paroxysm of your grief is passed, I

would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest until the Corn Laws are repealed.'

The invitation thus given was cordially accepted, and from that time dates the almost unique fellowship of these two men, who worked together in the closest brotherhood, who loved each other as not all brothers do, who were associated so closely in the public mind that until Cobden's death the name of one was scarcely ever mentioned without that of the other. There was something positively romantic about their mutual attachment. Each led a noble life; each was in his own way a man of genius; each was simple and strong. Rivalry between them would have been impossible, although they were every day being compared and contrasted by both friendly and unfriendly critics. Their gifts were admirably suited to make them powerful allies. Each had something that the other wanted. Bright had not Cobden's winning persuasiveness nor his surprising ease and force of argument. But Cobden had not anything like his companion's oratorical power. He had not the tones of scorn, of pathos, of humour, and of passion. The two together made a genuine power in the House of Commons and on the platform. Mr. Kinglake, who is as little in sympathy with the general political opinions of Cobden and Bright as any man well could be, has borne admirable testimony to their argumentative power and to their influence over the House of Commons: 'These two orators had shown with what a strength, with what a masterly skill, with what patience, with what a high



courage they could carry a scientific truth through the storms of politics. They had shown that they could arouse and govern the assenting thousands who listened to them with delight—that they could bend the House of Commons—that they could press their creed upon a Prime Minister, and put upon his mind so hard a stress, that after a while he felt it to be a torture and a violence to his reason to have to make a stand against them. Nay more. Each of these gifted men had proved that he could go bravely into the midst of angry opponents, could show them their fallacies one by one, destroy their favourite theories before their very faces, and triumphantly argue them down.’ It was indeed a scientific truth which in the first instance Cobden and Bright undertook to force upon the recognition of a Parliament composed in great measure of the very men who were taught to believe that their own personal and class interests were bound up with the maintenance of the existing economical creed. Those who hold that because it was a scientific truth the task of its advocates ought to have been easy, will do well to observe the success of the resistance which has been thus far offered to it in almost every country but England alone.

These men had many assistants and lieutenants well worthy to act with them and under them. Mr. W. J. Fox, for instance, a Unitarian minister of great popularity and remarkable eloquence, seemed at one time almost to divide public admiration as an orator with Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright. Mr. Milner Gibson, who had been a Tory, went over to the move-

ment, and gave it the assistance of trained Parliamentary knowledge and very considerable debating skill. In the Lancashire towns the League had the advantage of being officered for the most part by shrewd and sound men of business, who gave their time as freely as they gave their money to the advancement of the cause. It is curious to compare the manner in which the Anti-Corn Law agitation was conducted, with the manner in which the contemporary agitation in Ireland for Repeal of the Union was carried on. In England the agitation was based on the most strictly business principles. The leaders spoke and acted as if the League itself were some great commercial firm, which was bound above all things to fulfil its promises and keep to the letter as well as the spirit of its engagements. There was no boasting ; there was no exaggeration ; there were no appeals to passion ; no romantic rousings of sentimental emotion. The system of the agitation was as clear, straightforward and business-like as its purpose. In Ireland there were monster meetings with all manner of dramatic and theatric effects ; with rhetorical exaggeration and vehement appeal to passion and to ancient memory of suffering. The cause was kept up from day to day by assurances of near success so positive that it is sometimes hard to believe those who made them could themselves have been deceived by them. No doubt the difference will be described by many as the mere result of the difference between the one cause and the other ; between the agitation for Free Trade, clear, tangible and prac-

tical, and that for Repeal of the Union with its shadowy object and its visionary impulses. But a better explanation of the difference will be found in the different natures to which an appeal had to be made. It is not by any means certain that O'Connell's cause was a mere shadow ; nor will it appear, if we study the criticism of the time, that the guides of public opinion who pronounced the Repeal agitation absurd and ludicrous had any better words at first for the movement against the Corn Laws. Cobden and Bright on the one side, O'Connell on the other, knew the audiences they had to address. It would have been impossible to stir the blood of the Lancashire artisan by means of the appeals which went to the very heart of the dreamy, sentimental impassioned Celt of the South of Ireland. The Munster peasant would have understood little of such clear penetrating business-like argument as that by which Cobden and Bright enforced their doctrines. Had O'Connell's cause been as practical and its success been as immediately attainable as that of the Anti-Corn Law League, the great Irish agitator would still have had to address his followers in a different tone of appeal. 'All men are not alike,' says the Norman butler to the Flemish soldier in Scott's 'Betrothed : ' 'that which will but warm your Flemish hearts will put wildfire into Norman brains ; and what may only encourage your countrymen to man the walls, will make ours fly over the battlements.' The most impassioned Celt, however, will admit that in the Anti-Corn Law movement of Cobden and Bright,

with its rigid truthfulness and its strict proportion between capacity and promise, there was an entirely new dignity lent to popular agitation which raised it to the condition of statesmanship in the rough. The Reform agitation in England had not been conducted without some exaggeration, much appeal to passion, and some not by any means indistinct allusion to the reserve of popular force which might be called into action if legislators and peers proved insensible to argument. The era of the Anti-Corn Law movement was a new epoch altogether in English political controversy.

The League, however, successful as it might be throughout the country, had its great work to do in Parliament. The Free Trade leaders must have found their hearts sink within them when they came sometimes to confront that fortress of traditions and of vested rights. Even after the change made in favour of manufacturing and middle class interests by the Reform Bill, the House of Commons was still composed, as to nine-tenths of its whole number, by representatives of the landlords. The entire House of Lords then was constituted of the owners of land. All tradition, all prestige, all the dignity of aristocratic institutions, seemed to be naturally arrayed against the new movement, conducted as it was by manufacturers and traders for the benefit seemingly of trade and those whom it employed. The artisan population who might have been formidable as a disturbing element were on the whole rather against the Free Traders than for them. Nearly all the great

official leaders had to be converted to the doctrines of Free Trade. Many of the Whigs were willing enough to admit the case of Free Trade as the young Scotch lady mentioned by Sydney Smith admitted the case of love 'in the abstract;' but they could not recognise the possibility of applying it in the complicated financial conditions of an artificial system like ours. Some of the Whigs were in favour of a fixed duty in place of the existing sliding scale. The leaders of the movement had indeed to resist a very dangerous temptation coming from statesmen who professed to be in accordance with them as to the mere principle of protection, but who were always endeavouring to persuade them that they had better accept any decent compromise and not push their demands to extremes. The witty peer who in a former generation answered an advocate of moderate reform by asking him what he thought of moderate chastity, might have had many opportunities, if he had been engaged in the Free Trade movement, of turning his epigram to account.

Mr. Macaulay, for instance, wrote to the electors of Edinburgh to remonstrate with them on what he considered their fanatical and uncompromising adherence to the principle of Free Trade. 'In my opinion,' Mr. Macaulay wrote to his constituents, 'you are all wrong—not because you think all protection bad, for I think so too; not even because you avow your opinion and attempt to propagate it; for I have always done the same, and shall do the same; but because, being in a situation where your only hope

is in a compromise, you refuse to hear of compromise ; because, being in a situation where every person who will go a step with you on the right road ought to be cordially welcomed, you drive from you those who are willing and desirous to go with you half way. To this policy I will be no party. I will not abandon those with whom I have hitherto acted, and without whose help I am confident that no great improvement can be effected, for an object purely selfish.' It had not occurred to Mr. Macaulay that any party but the Whigs could bring in any measure of fiscal or other reform worth the having ; and indeed he probably thought it would be something like an act of ingratitude amounting to a species of sacrilege to accept reform from any hands but those of its recognised Whig patrons. The Anti-Corn Law agitation introduced a game of politics into England which astonished and considerably discomfited steady-going politicians like Macaulay. The League men did not profess to be bound by any indefeasible bond of allegiance to the Whig party. They were prepared to co-operate with any party whatever which would undertake to abolish the Corn-Laws. Their agitation would have done some good in this way, if in no other sense. It introduced a more robust and independent spirit into political life. It is almost ludicrous sometimes to read the diatribes of supporters of Lord Melbourne's Government, for example, against anyone who should presume to think that any object in the mind of a true patriot, or at least of a true Liberal, could equal in importance that

of keeping the Melbourne Ministry in power. Great reforms have been made by Conservative governments in our own days, because the new political temper which was growing up in England refused to affirm that the patent of reform rested in the possession of any particular party, and that if the holders of the monopoly did not find it convenient, or were not in the humour, to use it any further just then, no one else must venture to interfere in the matter, or to undertake the duty which they had declined to perform. At the time that Macaulay wrote his letter, however, it had not entered into the mind of any Whig to believe it possible that the repeal of the Corn Laws was to be the work of a great Conservative minister, done at the bidding of two Radical politicians.

It is a significant fact that the Anti-Corn Law League were not in the least discouraged by the accession of Sir Robert Peel to power. To them the fixed duty proposed by Lord John Russell was as objectionable as Peel's sliding scale. Their hopes seem rather to have gone up than gone down when the minister came into power whose adherents, unlike those of Lord John Russell, were absolutely against the very principle of Free Trade. It is of some importance in estimating the morality of the course pursued by Peel, to observe the opinion formed of his professions and his probable purposes by the shrewd men who led the Anti-Corn Law League. The grand charge against Peel is that he betrayed his party; that he induced them to continue their allegiance to him on the promise that he would never

concede the principle of Free Trade ; and that he used his power to establish Free Trade when the time came to choose between it and a surrender of office. Now it is certain that the League always regarded Sir Robert Peel as a Free Trader in heart ; as one who fully admitted the principle of Free Trade, but who did not see his way just then to deprive the agricultural interest of the protection on which they had for so many years been allowed and encouraged to lean. In the debate after the general election of 1841, the debate which turned out the Melbourne Ministry, Mr. Cobden, then for the first time a member of the House of Commons, said : ‘ I am a Free Trader ; I call myself neither Whig nor Tory. I am proud to acknowledge the virtue of the Whig Ministry in coming out from the ranks of the monopolists and advancing three parts out of four in my own direction. Yet if the right honourable baronet opposite (Sir R. Peel) advances one step further, I will be the first to meet him half way, and shake hands with him.’ Some years later Mr. Cobden said at Birmingham, ‘ There can be no doubt that Sir Robert Peel is, at heart, as good a Free Trader as I am. He has told us so in the House of Commons again and again ; nor do I doubt that Sir Robert Peel has in his inmost heart the desire to be the man who shall carry out the principles of Free Trade in this country.’ Sir Robert Peel had indeed, as Mr. Cobden said, again and again in Parliament expressed his conviction as to the general truth of the principles of Free Trade. In 1842, he declared it to be utterly beyond the power



of Parliament, and a mere delusion, to say that by any duty, fixed or otherwise, a certain price could be guaranteed to the producer. In the same year he expressed his belief that, 'on the general principle of Free Trade there is now no great difference of opinion, and that all agree in the general rule that we should buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market.' This expression of opinion called forth an ironical cheer from the benches of opposition. Peel knew well what the cheer was meant to convey. He knew it meant to ask him why then he did not allow the country to buy its grain in the cheapest market. He promptly added—'I know the meaning of that cheer. I do not wish to raise a discussion on the Corn Laws or the Sugar Duties, which I contend, however, are exceptions to the general rule, and I will not go into that question now.' The press of the day, whether for or against Peel, commented upon his declarations and his measures as indicating clearly that the bent of his mind was towards free trade even in grain. At all events he had reached that mental condition when he regarded the case of grain, like that of sugar, as a necessary exception for the time to the operation of a general rule.

It ought to have been obvious that if exceptional circumstances should arise, pulling more strongly in the direction of the League, Sir Robert Peel's own explicit declarations must bind him to recognise the necessity of applying the Free Trade principles even to corn. 'Sir Robert Peel,' says his cousin Sir Laurence Peel, in a sketch of the life and character of the great statesman, 'had been, as I have said,

always a Free Trader. The questions to which he had declined to apply those principles had been viewed by him as exceptional. The Corn Law had been so treated by many able exponents of the principles of Free Trade.' Sir Robert Peel himself has left it on record that during the discussions on the Corn Law of 1842 he was more than once pressed to give a guarantee, 'so far as a minister could give it,' that the amount of protection established by that law should be permanently adhered to ; 'but although I did not then contemplate the necessity for further change, I uniformly refused to fetter the discretion of the Government by any such assurances as those that were required of me.' It is evident that the condition of Sir Robert Peel's opinions was even as far back as 1842 something very different indeed from that of the ordinary county member or pledged Protectionist, and that Peel had done all he could to make this clear to his party. A minister who in 1842 refused to fetter the discretion of his Government in dealing with the protection of home-grown grain ought not on the face of things to be accused of violating his pledges and betraying his party, if four years later, under the pressure of extraordinary circumstances, he made up his mind to the abolition of such a protection. Let us test this in a manner that will be familiar to our own time. Suppose a Prime Minister is pressed by some of his own party to give the House of Commons a guarantee, 'so far as a minister could give it,' that the principle of the State Church Establishment in England shall be permanently adhered

to. He declines to fetter the discretion of the Government in the future. Is it not evident that such an answer would be taken by nine out of ten of his listeners to be ominous of some change to the Established Church? If four years after the same minister were to propose to disestablish the Church, he might be denounced and he might even be execrated, but no one could fairly accuse him of having violated his pledge and betrayed his party.

The country party, however, did not understand Sir Robert Peel as their opponents and his assuredly understood him. They did not at this time believe in the possibility of any change. Free Trade was to them little more than an abstraction. They did not much care who preached it out of Parliament. They were convinced that the state of things they saw around them when they were boys would continue to the end. They looked on Mr. Villiers and his annual motion in favour of Free Trade very much as a stout old Tory of later times might regard the annual motion for woman suffrage. Both parties in the House—that is to say, both of the parties from whom ministers were taken—alike set themselves against the introduction of any such measure. The supporters of it were, with one exception, not men of family and rank. It was agitated for a good deal out of doors, but agitation had not up to that time succeeded in making much way even with a reformed Parliament. The country party observed that some men among the two leading sets went farther in favour of the abstract principle than others; but it did not seem

to them that that really affected the practical question very much. In 1842 Mr. Disraeli himself was one of those who stood up for the Free Trade principle, and insisted that it had been rather the inherited principle of the Conservatives than of the Whigs. Country gentlemen did not therefore greatly concern themselves about the practical work doing in Manchester, or the professions of abstract opinion so often made in Parliament. They did not see that the mind of their leader was avowedly in a progressive condition on the subject of Free Trade. Because they could not bring themselves to question for a moment the principle of protection for home-grown grain, they made up their minds that it was a principle as sacred with him. Against that conviction no evidence could prevail. It was with them a point of conscience and honour ; it would have seemed an insult to their leader to believe even his own words if these seemed to say that it was a mere question of expediency, convenience and time with him.

Perhaps it would have been better if Sir Robert Peel had devoted himself more directly to what Mr. Disraeli afterwards called educating his party. Perhaps if he had made it part of his duty as a leader to prepare the minds of his followers for the fact that protection for grain having ceased to be tenable as an economic principle would possibly some day have to be given up as a practice, he might have taken his party along with him. He might have been able to show them, as the events have shown them since, that the introduction of free corn would be a blessing to

the population of England in general, and would do nothing but good for the landed interest as well. The influence of Peel at that time, and indeed all through his administration up to the introduction of his Free Trade measures, was limitless, so far as his party were concerned. He could have done anything with them. Indeed we find no evidence so clear to prove that Peel had not in 1842 made up his mind to the introduction of Free Trade as the fact that he did not at once begin to educate his party to it. This is to be regretted. The measure might have been passed by common accord. There is something not altogether without pathetic influence in the thought of that country party whom Peel had led so long, and who adored him so thoroughly, turning away from him and against him and mournfully seeking another leader. There is something pathetic in the thought that rightly or wrongly they should have believed themselves betrayed by their chief. But Peel to begin with was a reserved, cold, somewhat awkward man. He was not effusive ; he did not pour out his emotions and reveal all his changes of opinion in bursts of confidence even to his habitual associates. He brooded over these things in his own mind ; he gave such expression to them in open debate as any passing occasion seemed strictly to call for ; and he assumed perhaps that the gradual changes operating in his views when thus expressed were understood by his followers. Above all, it is probable that Peel himself did not see until almost the last moment that the time had actually come when the principle of pro-

tection must give way to other and more weighty claims. In his speech announcing his intended legislation in 1846, Sir Robert Peel, with a proud frankness which was characteristic of him, denied that his altered course of action was due exclusively to the failure of the potato crop and the dread of famine in Ireland. 'I will not,' he said, 'withhold the homage which is due to the progress of reason and of truth by denying that my opinions on the subject of Protection have undergone a change. . . . I will not direct the course of the vessel by observations taken in 1842.' But it is probable that if the Irish famine had not threatened, the moment for introducing the new legislation might have been indefinitely postponed. The prospects of the Anti-Corn Law League did not look by any means bright when the session preceding the introduction of the Free Trade legislation came to an end. The number of votes that the League could count on in Parliament did not much exceed that which the advocates of Home Rule have been able to reckon up in our day. Nothing in 1843 or in the earlier part of 1845 pointed to any immediate necessity for Sir Robert Peel's testing the progress of his own convictions by reducing them into the shape of practical action. It is therefore not hard to understand how even a far-seeing and conscientious statesman busy with the practical work of each day might have put off taking definite counsel with himself as to the introduction of measures for which just then there seemed no special necessity, and which could hardly be introduced without bitter controversy.

## CHAPTER XV.

## FAMINE FORCES PEEL'S HAND.

WE see how the two great parties of the State stood with regard to this question of Free Trade. The Whigs were steadily gravitating towards it. Their leaders did not quite see their way to accept it as a principle of practical statesmanship, but it was evident that their acceptance of it was only a question of time, and of no long time. The leader of the Tory party was being drawn day by day more in the same direction. Both leaders, Russell and Peel, had gone so far as to admit the general principle of Free Trade. Peel had contended that grain was in England a necessary exception; Russell was not of opinion that the time had come when it could be treated otherwise than as an exception. The Free Trade party, small, indeed, in its Parliamentary force, but daily growing more and more powerful with the country, would take nothing from either leader but Free Trade *sans phrase*; and would take that from either leader without regard to partisan considerations. It is evident to anyone who knows anything of the working of our system of government by party, that this must soon have ended in one or other of the two great ruling parties forming an alliance with the Free Traders. If

unforeseen events had not interposed, it is probable that conviction would first have fastened on the minds of the Whigs, and that they would have had the honour of abolishing the Corn Laws. They were out of office, and did not seem likely to get back soon to it by their own power, and the Free Trade party would have come in time to be a very desirable ally. It would be idle to pretend to doubt that the convictions of political parties are hastened on a good deal under our system by the yearning of those who are out of office to get the better of those who are in. Statesmen in England are converted as Henry of Navarre became Catholic: we do not say that they actually change their opinions for the sake of making themselves eligible for power, but a change which has been growing up imperceptibly, and which might otherwise have taken a long time to declare itself, is stimulated thus to confess itself and come out into the light. But in the case of the Anti-Corn Law agitation, an event over which political parties had no control intervened to spur the intent of the Prime Minister. Mr. Bright many years after, when pronouncing the eulogy of his dead friend Cobden, described what happened in a fine sentence: 'Famine itself, against which we had warred, joined us.' In the autumn of 1845 the potato rot began in Ireland.

The vast majority of the working population of Ireland were known to depend absolutely on the potato for subsistence. In the northern province, where the population were of Scotch extraction, the oatmeal, the brose of their ancestors, still supplied the



staple of their food ; but in the southern and western provinces a large proportion of the peasantry actually lived on the potato and the potato alone. In these districts whole generations grew up, lived, married, and passed away, without having ever tasted flesh meat. It was evident then that a failure in the potato crop would be equivalent to famine. Many of the labouring class received little or no money wages. They lived on what was called the 'cottier tenant system' ; that is to say, a man worked for a landowner on condition of getting the use of a little scrap of land for himself, on which to grow potatoes to be the sole food of himself and his family. The news came in the autumn of 1845 that the long continuance of sunless wet and cold had imperilled, if not already destroyed, the food of a people.

The Cabinet of Sir Robert Peel held hasty meetings closely following each other. People began to ask whether Parliament was about to be called together, and whether the Government had resolved on a bold policy. The Anti-Corn Law League were clamouring for the opening of the ports. The Prime Minister himself was strongly in favour of such a course. He urged upon his colleagues that all restrictions upon the importation of foreign corn should be suspended either by an Order in Council, or by calling Parliament together and recommending such a measure from the throne. It is now known that in offering this advice to his colleagues Peel accompanied it with the expression of a doubt as to whether it would ever be possible to restore the restrictions

that had once been suspended. Indeed this doubt must have filled every mind. The League were openly declaring that one reason why they called for the opening of the ports was that once opened they never could be closed again. The doubt was enough for some of the colleagues of Sir Robert Peel. It seems marvellous now how responsible statesmen could struggle for the retention of restrictions which were so unpopular and indefensible that if they were once suspended under the pressure of no matter what exceptional necessity, they never could be reimposed. The Duke of Wellington and Lord Stanley, however, opposed the idea of opening the ports, and the proposal fell through. The Cabinet merely resolved on appointing a Commission, consisting of the heads of departments in Ireland, to take some steps to guard against a sudden outbreak of famine, and the thought of an autumnal session was abandoned. Sir Robert Peel himself has thus tersely described the manner in which his proposals were received : 'The Cabinet by a very considerable majority declined giving its assent to the proposals which I thus made to them. They were supported by only three members of the Cabinet, the Earl of Aberdeen, Sir James Graham, and Mr. Sidney Herbert. The other members of the Cabinet, some on the ground of objection to the principle of the measures recommended, others upon the ground that there was not yet sufficient evidence of the necessity for them, withheld their sanction.'

The great cry all through Ireland was for the

opening of the ports. The Mansion House Relief Committee of Dublin issued a series of resolutions declaring their conviction from the most undeniable evidence that considerably more than one third of the entire potato crop in Ireland had been already destroyed by the disease, and that the disease had not ceased its ravages, but on the contrary was daily expanding more and more. 'No reasonable conjecture can be formed,' the resolutions went on to state, 'with respect to the limit of its effects short of the destruction of the entire remaining crop;' and the document concluded with a denunciation of the Ministry for not opening the ports, or calling Parliament together before the usual time for its assembling.

Two or three days after the issue of these resolutions Lord John Russell wrote a letter from Edinburgh to his constituents, the electors of the City of London—a letter which is one of the historical documents of the reign. It announced his unqualified conversion to the principles of the Anti-Corn Law League. The failure of the potato crop was of course the immediate occasion of this letter. 'Indecision and procrastination,' Lord John Russell wrote, 'may produce a state of suffering which it is frightful to contemplate. . . . It is no longer worth while to contend for a fixed duty. In 1841 the Free Trade party would have agreed to a duty of 8s. per quarter on wheat, and after a lapse of years this duty might have been further reduced, and ultimately abolished. But the imposition of any duty at present, without a

provision for its extinction within a short period, would but prolong a contest already sufficiently fruitful of animosity and discontent.' Lord John Russell then invited a general understanding, to put an end to a system 'which has been proved to be the blight of commerce, the bane of agriculture, the source of bitter division among classes, the cause of penury, fever, mortality and crime among the people.' Then the writer added a significant remark to the effect that the Government appeared to be waiting for some excuse to give up the present Corn Laws, and urging the people to afford them all the excuse they could desire, 'by petition, by address, by remonstrance.'

Peel himself has told us in his *Memoirs* what was the effect which this letter produced upon his own councils. It 'could not,' he points out, 'fail to exercise a very material influence on the public mind, and on the subject-matter of our deliberations in the Cabinet. It justified the conclusion that the Whig party was prepared to unite with the Anti-Corn Law League in demanding the total repeal of the Corn Laws.' Peel would not consent now to propose simply an opening of the ports. It would seem, he thought, a mere submission, to accept the minimum of the terms ordered by the Whig leader. That would have been well enough when he first recommended it to his Cabinet; and if it could then have been offered to the country as the spontaneous movement of a united Ministry, it would have been becoming of the emergency and of the men. But to do this now would be futile; would seem like trifling

with the question. Sir Robert Peel therefore recommended to his Cabinet an early meeting of Parliament with the view of bringing forward some measure equivalent to a speedy Repeal of the Corn Laws.

The recommendation was wise. It was, indeed, indispensable. Yet it is hard to think that an impartial posterity will form a very lofty estimate of the wisdom with which the counsels of the two great English parties were guided in this momentous emergency. Neither Whigs nor Tories appear to have formed a judgment because of facts or principles, but only in deference to the political necessities of the hour. Sir Robert Peel himself denied that it was the resistless hand of famine in Ireland which had brought him to his resolve that the Corn Laws ought to be abolished. He grew into the conviction that they were bad in principle. Lord John Russell had long been growing into the same conviction. Yet the League had been left to divide with but small numbers against overwhelming majorities made up of both parties, until the very session before Peel proposed to repeal the Corn Laws. Lord Beaconsfield, indeed, indulges in something like exaggeration when he says, in his 'Life of Lord George Bentinck,' that the close of the session of 1845 found the League nearly reduced to silence. But it is not untrue that, as he says, 'the Manchester confederates seemed to be least in favour with Parliament and the country on the very eve of their triumph.' 'They lost at the same time elections and the ear of the House; and the cause of total and immediate repeal seemed in a not

less hopeless position than when, under circumstances of infinite difficulty, it was first and solely upheld by the terse eloquence and vivid perception of Charles Villiers.' Lord Beaconsfield certainly ought to know what cause had and what had not the ear of the House of Commons at that time; and yet we venture to doubt, even after his assurance, whether the League and its speakers had in any way found their hold on the attention of Parliament diminishing. But the loss of elections is beyond dispute. It is a fact alluded to in the very letter from Lord John Russell which was creating so much commotion. 'It is not to be denied,' Lord John Russell writes, 'that many elections for cities and towns in 1841, and some in 1845, appear to favour the assertion that Free Trade is not popular with the great mass of the community.' This is, from whatever cause, a very common phenomenon in our political history. A movement which began with the promise of sweeping all before it seems after a while to lose its force, and is supposed by many observers to be now only the work and the care of a few earnest and fanatical men. Suddenly it is taken up by a minister of commanding influence, and the bore or the crotchet of one Parliament is the great party controversy of a second, and the accomplished triumph of a third. In this instance it is beyond dispute that the League seemed to be somewhat losing in strength and influence just on the eve of its complete triumph. He must, indeed, be the very optimist of Parliamentary government who upholds the manner of Free Trade's final adoption as abso-

lutely satisfactory, and as reflecting nothing but credit upon the counsels of our two great political parties. Such a well-contented personage might be fairly asked to explain why a system of protective taxation, beginning to be regarded by all thoughtful statesmen as bad in itself, should never be examined with a view to its repeal until the force of a great emergency and the rival biddings of party leaders came to render its repeal inevitable. The Corn Laws, as all the world now admits, were a cruel burden to the poor and the working class of England. They were justly described by Lord John Russell as 'the blight of commerce, the bane of agriculture, the source of bitter division among classes; the cause of penury, fever, mortality and crime among the people.' All this was independent of the sudden and ephemeral calamity of the potato rot, which at the time when Lord John Russell wrote that letter did not threaten to become nearly so fatal as it afterwards proved to be. One cannot help asking how long would the Corn Laws be suffered thus to blight commerce and agriculture, to cause division among classes, and to produce penury, mortality and crime among the people, if the potato rot in Ireland had not rendered it necessary to do something without delay?

The potato rot, however, inspired the writing of Lord John Russell's letter; and Lord John Russell's letter inspired Sir Robert Peel with the conviction that something must be done. Most of his colleagues were inclined to go with him this time. A Cabinet Council was held on November 25, almost imme-

diately after the publication of Lord John Russell's letter. At that council Sir Robert Peel recommended the summoning of Parliament with a view to instant measures to combat the famine in Ireland, but with a view also to some announcement of legislation intended to pave the way for the repeal of the Corn Laws. Lord Stanley still hesitated, and asked time to consider his decision. The Duke of Wellington was unchanged in his private opinion that the Corn Laws ought to be maintained; but he declared with a blunt simplicity that his only object in public life was 'to support Sir Robert Peel's administration of the Government for the Queen.' 'A good Government for the country,' said the sturdy and simple old hero, 'is more important than Corn Laws or any other consideration.' One may smile at this notion of a good government without reference to the quality of the legislation it introduces; it reminds one a little of the celebrated study of history without reference to time or place. But the Duke acted strictly up to his principles of duty, and he declared that if Sir Robert Peel considered the repeal of the Corn Laws to be, not right or necessary for the welfare of England, but requisite for the maintenance of Sir Robert Peel's position 'in Parliament and in the public view,' he should thoroughly support the proposal. Lord Stanley, however, was not to be changed in the end. He took time to consider, and seems really to have tried his best to persuade himself that he could fall in with the new position which the Premier had assumed. Meanwhile the most excited condition of



public feeling prevailed throughout London and the country generally. The *Times* newspaper came out on December 4 with the announcement that the Ministry had made up its mind, and that the Royal speech at the commencement of the session would recommend an immediate consideration of the Corn Laws preparatory to their total repeal. It would be hardly possible to exaggerate the excitement caused by this startling piece of news. It was indignantly and in unqualified terms declared a falsehood by the ministerial prints. Long arguments were gone into to prove that even if the fact announced were true, it could not possibly have been known to the *Times*. In Disraeli's 'Coningsby' Mr. Rigby gives the clearest and most convincing reasons to prove first that Lord Spencer could not be dead, as report said he was; and next, that even if he were dead, the fact could not possibly be known to those who took on themselves to announce it. He is hardly silenced even by the assurance of a great duke that he is one of Lord Spencer's executors, and that Lord Spencer is certainly dead. So the announcement in the *Times* was fiercely and pedantically argued against. 'It can't be true;' 'the *Times* could not get to know of it;' 'it must be a Cabinet secret if it were true;' 'nobody outside the Cabinet could possibly know of it;' 'if anyone outside the Cabinet could get to know of it, it would not be the *Times*;' it would be this, that, or the other person or journal; and so forth. Long after it had been made certain, beyond even Mr. Rigby's power of disputation, that the announcement

was true so far as the resolve of the Prime Minister was concerned, people continued to argue and controvert as to the manner in which the *Times* became possessed of the secret. The general conclusion came to among the knowing was that the blandishments of a gifted and beautiful lady with a dash of political intrigue in her had somehow extorted the secret from a young and handsome member of the Cabinet, and that she had communicated it to the *Times*. It is not impossible that this may have been the true explanation. It was believed in by a great many persons who might have been in a position to judge of the probabilities. On the other hand, there were surely signs and tokens enough by which a shrewd politician might have guessed what was to come without any intervention of petticoat diplomacy. It seems odd now that people should then have distressed themselves so much by conjectures as to the source of the information when once it was made certain that the information itself was substantially true. This it undoubtedly was, although it did not tell all the truth, and could not foretell. For there was an ordeal yet to be gone through before the Prime Minister could put his plans into operation. On December 4 the *Times* made the announcement. On the 6th, having been passionately contradicted, it repeated the assertion. 'We adhere to our original announcement that Parliament will meet early in January, and that a repeal of the Corn Laws will be proposed in one House by Sir R. Peel, and in the other by the Duke of Wellington.' But in the mean-

time the opposition in the Cabinet had proved itself unmanageable. Lord Stanley and the Duke of Buccleuch intimated to the Prime Minister that they could not be parties to any measure involving the ultimate repeal of the Corn Laws. Sir Robert Peel did not believe that he could carry out his project satisfactorily under such circumstances, and he therefore hastened to tender his resignation to the Queen. 'The other members of the Cabinet, without exception, I believe'—these are Sir Robert Peel's own words—'concurred in this opinion; and under these circumstances I considered it to be my duty to tender my resignation to her Majesty. On the 5th of December I repaired to Osborne, Isle of Wight, and humbly solicited her Majesty to relieve me from duties which I felt I could no longer discharge with advantage to her Majesty's service.' The very day after the *Times* made its famous announcement, the very day before the *Times* repeated it, the Prime Minister who was to propose the repeal of the Corn Laws went out of office.

*Quem divere chaos!* Apparently chaos had come again. Lord John Russell was sent for from Edinburgh. His letter had without any such purpose on his part written him up as the man to take Sir Robert Peel's place. Lord John Russell came to London and did his best to cope with the many difficulties of the situation. His party were not very strong in the country, and they had not a majority in the House of Commons. He very naturally endeavoured to obtain from Peel a pledge that he would support the

immediate and complete repeal of the Corn Laws. Peel, writing to the Queen, 'humbly expresses his regret that he does not feel it to be consistent with his duty to enter upon the consideration of this important question in Parliament fettered by a previous engagement of the nature of that required of him.' The position of Lord John Russell was awkward. He had been forced into it because one or two of Sir Robert Peel's colleagues would not consent to adopt the policy of their chief. But the very fact of so stubborn an opposition from a man of Lord Stanley's influence showed clearly enough that the passing of Free Trade measures was not to be effected without stern resistance from the country party. The whole risk and burden had seemingly been thrown on Lord John Russell; and now Sir Robert Peel would not even pledge himself to unconditional support of the very policy which was understood to be his own. Lord John Russell showed, even then, his characteristic courage. He resolved to form a Ministry without a Parliamentary majority. He was not however fated to try the ordeal. Lord Grey, who was a few months before Lord Howick, and who had just succeeded to the title of his father (the stately Charles Earl Grey, the pupil of Fox, and chief of the Cabinet which passed the Reform Bill and abolished slavery)—Lord Grey felt a strong objection to the foreign policy of Lord Palmerston, and these two could not get on in one Ministry as it was part of Lord John Russell's plan that they should do. Lord Grey also was strongly of opinion that a seat in the

Cabinet ought to be offered to Mr. Cobden ; but other great Whigs could not bring themselves to any larger sacrifice to justice and common sense than a suggestion that the office of Vice-President of the Board of Trade should be tendered to the leader of the Free Trade movement. Mr. Macaulay describes the events in a letter to the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce. ' All our plans were frustrated by Lord Grey, who objected to Lord Palmerston being Foreign Secretary. I hope that the public interests will not suffer. Sir Robert Peel must now undertake the settlement of the question. It is certain that he can settle it. It is by no means certain that we could have done so. For we shall to a man support him ; and a large proportion of those who are now in office would have refused to support us.' One passage in Macaulay's letter will be read with peculiar interest. ' From the first,' he says, ' I told Lord John Russell that I stipulated for one thing only—total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws ; that my objections to gradual abolition were insurmountable ; but that if he declared for total and immediate repeal I would be as to all other matters absolutely in his hands ; that I would take any office, or no office, just as suited him best ; and that he should never be disturbed by any personal pretensions or jealousies on my part.' No one can doubt Macaulay's sincerity and singleness of purpose. But it is surprising to note the change that the agitation of little more than two years has made in his opinions on the subject of a policy of immediate and unconditional abolition.

In February 1843 he was pointing out to the electors of Edinburgh the unwisdom of refusing a compromise, and in December 1845 he is writing to Edinburgh to say that the one only thing for which he must stipulate was total and immediate repeal. The Anti-Corn Law League might well be satisfied with the propagandist work they had done. The League itself looked on very composedly during these little altercations and embarrassments of parties. They knew well enough now that let who would take power he must carry out their policy. At a meeting of the League, which was held in Covent Garden Theatre on the 17th of this memorable month, and while the negotiations were still going on, Mr. Cobden declared that he and his friends had not striven to keep one party in or another out of office. 'We have worked with but one principle and one object in view ; and if we maintain that principle for but six months more, we shall attain to that state which I have so long and so anxiously desired, when the League shall be dissolved into its primitive elements by the triumph of its principles.'

Lord John Russell found it impossible to form a Ministry. He signified his failure to the Queen. Probably, having done the best he could, he was not particularly distressed to find that his efforts were ineffectual. The Queen had to send for Sir Robert Peel to Windsor and tell him that she must require him to withdraw his resignation and to remain in her service. Sir Robert of course could only comply. The Queen offered to give him some time to enter

into communication with his colleagues, but Sir Robert very wisely thought that he could speak with much greater authority if he were to invite them to support him in an effort on which he was determined and which he had positively undertaken to make. He therefore returned from Windsor on the evening of December 20, 'having resumed all the functions of First Minister of the Crown.' The Duke of Buccleuch withdrew his opposition to the policy which Peel was now to carry out; but Lord Stanley remained firm. The place of the latter was taken as Secretary of State for the Colonies by Mr. Gladstone, who however curiously enough remained without a seat in Parliament during the eventful session that was now to come. Mr. Gladstone had sat for the borough of Newark, but that borough being under the influence of the Duke of Newcastle, who had withdrawn his support from the Ministry, he did not invite re-election, but remained without a seat in the House of Commons for some months. Sir Robert Peel then, to use his own words in a letter to the Princess de Lieven, resumed power 'with greater means of rendering public service than I should have had if I had not relinquished it.' He felt, he said, 'like a man restored to life after his funeral service had been preached.'

Parliament was summoned to meet in January. In the meantime it was easily seen how the Protectionists and the Tories of the extreme order generally would regard the proposals of Sir Robert Peel. Protectionist meetings were held in various parts of

the country, and they were all but unanimous in condemning by anticipation the policy of the restored Premier. Resolutions were passed at many of these meetings expressing an equal disbelief in the Prime Minister and in the famine. The utmost indignation was expressed at the idea of there being any famine in prospect which could cause any departure from the principles which secured to the farmers a certain fixed price for their grain, or at least prevented the price from falling below what they considered a paying amount. Not less absurd than the protestations that there would be no famine, were some of the remedies which were suggested for it if it should insist on coming in. The Duke of Norfolk of that time made himself particularly conspicuous by a beneficent suggestion which he offered to a distressed population. He went about recommending a curry powder of his own device as a charm against hunger.

Parliament met. The opening day was January 22, 1846. The Queen in person opened the session, and the speech from the throne said a good deal about the condition of Ireland and the failure of the potato crop. The speech contained one significant sentence. 'I have had' her Majesty was made to say, 'great satisfaction in giving my assent to the measures which you have presented to me from time to time, calculated to extend commerce and to stimulate domestic skill and industry, by the repeal of prohibitive and the relaxation of protective duties. I recommend you to take into your early consideration whether the principle on which you have acted



may not with advantage be yet more extensively applied.' Before the address in reply to the speech from the throne was moved, Sir Robert Peel gave notice of the intention of the Government on the earliest possible day to submit to the consideration of the House measures connected with the commercial and financial affairs of the country.

There are few scenes more animated and exciting than that presented by the House of Commons on some night when a great debate is expected, or when some momentous announcement is to be made. A common thrill seems to tremble all through the assembly as a breath of wind runs across the sea. The House appears for the moment to be one body pervaded by one expectation. The ministerial benches, the front benches of opposition, are occupied by the men of political renown and of historic name. The benches everywhere else are crowded to their utmost capacity. Members who cannot get seats—on such an occasion a goodly number—stand below the bar or have to dispose themselves along the side galleries. The celebrities are not confined to the Treasury benches or those of the leaders of opposition. Here and there, among the independent members and below the gangway on both sides, are seen men of influence and renown. At the opening of Parliament in 1846 this was especially to be observed. The rising fame of the Free Trade leaders made them almost like a third great party in the House of Commons. The strangers' gallery, the Speaker's gallery on such a night are crowded to excess. The eye surveys the

whole House and sees no vacant place. In the very hum of conversation that runs along the benches there is a tone of profound anxiety. The minister who has to face that House and make the announcement for which all are waiting in a most feverish anxiety is a man to be envied by the ambitious. This time there was a curiosity about everything. What was the minister about to announce? When and in what fashion would he announce it? Would the Whig leaders speak before the ministerial announcement? Would the Free Traders? What voice would first hint to the expectant Commons the course which political events were destined to take? The moving of an address to the throne is always a formal piece of business. It would be hardly possible for Cicero or Burke to be very interesting when performing such a task. On the other hand, it is an excellent chance for a young beginner. He finds the House in a sort of contemptuously indulgent mood, prepared to welcome the slightest evidence of any capacity of speech above the dullest mediocrity. He can hardly say anything absurd or offensive unless he goes absolutely out of his way to make a fool of himself; and on the other hand he can easily say his little nothings in a graceful way, and receive grateful applause accordingly from an assembly which counts on being bored, and feels doubly indebted to the speaker who is even in the slightest degree an agreeable disappointment. On this particular occasion, however, the duty of the proposer and seconder of the address was made specially trying by the fact

that they had to interfere with merely formal utterances between an eager House and an exciting announcement. A certain piquancy was lent, however, to the performance of the duty by the fact, which the speeches made evident beyond the possibility of mistake, that the proposer of the address knew quite well what the Government were about to do, and that the seconder knew nothing whatever.

Now the formal task is done. The address has been moved and seconded. The Speaker puts the question that the address be adopted. Now is the time for debate, if debate there is to be. On such occasions there is always some discussion, but it is commonly as mere a piece of formality as the address itself. It is understood that the leader of opposition will say something meaning next to nothing; that two or three men will grumble vaguely at the Ministry; that the leader of the House will reply; and then the affair is all over. But on this occasion it was certain that some momentous announcement would have to be made; and the question was when it would come. Perhaps no one expected exactly what did happen. Nothing can be more unusual than for the leader of the House to open the debate on such an occasion; and Sir Robert Peel was usually somewhat of a formalist, who kept to the regular ways in all that pertained to the business of the House. No eyes of expectation were turned therefore to the ministerial bench at the moment after the formal putting of the question by the Speaker. It was rather expected that Lord John Russell, or perhaps Mr.

Cobden, would arise. But a surprised murmur running through all parts of the House soon told those who could not see the Treasury bench that something unusual had happened; and in a moment the voice of the Prime Minister was heard—that marvellous voice of which Lord Beaconsfield says that it had not in his time any equal in the House ‘unless we except the thrilling tones of O’Connell’—and it was known that the great explanation was coming at once.

The explanation even now, however, was somewhat deferred. The Prime Minister showed a deliberate intention, it might have been thought, not to come to the point at once. He went into long and laboured explanations of the manner in which his mind had been brought into a change on the subject of Free Trade and Protection; and he gave exhaustive calculations to show that the reduction of duty was constantly followed by expansion of the revenue, and even a maintenance of high prices. The duties on glass, the duties on flax, the prices of salt pork and domestic lard, the contract price of salt beef for the navy—these and many other such topics were discussed at great length, and with elaborate fulness of detail in the hearing of an eager House anxious only for that night to know whether or not the minister meant to introduce the principle of Free Trade. Peel, however, made it clear enough that he had become a complete convert to the doctrines of the Manchester school, and that in his opinion the time had come when that protection which he had taken office to maintain must for ever be abandoned.

One sentence at the close of his speech was made the occasion of much laboured criticism and some severe accusation. It was that in which Peel declared that he found it 'no easy task to ensure the harmonious and united action of an ancient monarchy, a proud aristocracy, and a reformed House of Commons.'

The explanation was over. The House of Commons were left rather to infer than to understand what the Government proposed to do. Lord John Russell entered into some personal explanations relating to his endeavour to form a Ministry, and the causes of its failure. These have not much interest for a later time. It might have seemed that the work of the night was done. It was evident that the ministerial policy could not be discussed then; for in fact it had not been announced. The House knew that the Prime Minister was a convert to the principles of Free Trade; but that was all that anyone could be said to know except those who were in the secrets of the Cabinet. There appeared therefore nothing for it but to wait until the time should come for the formal announcement and the full discussion of the Government measures. Suddenly, however, a new and striking figure intervened in the languishing debate, and filled the House of Commons with a fresh life. There is not often to be found in our Parliamentary history an example like this of a sudden turn given to a whole career by a timely speech. The member who rose to comment on the explanation of Sir Robert Peel had been for many years in the House

of Commons. This was his tenth session. He had spoken often in each session. He had made many bold attempts to win a name in Parliament, and hitherto his political career had been simply a failure. From the hour when he spoke this speech, it was one long, unbroken, brilliant success.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## MR. DISRAELI.

THE speaker who rose into such sudden prominence and something like the position of a party leader was one of the most remarkable men the politics of the reign have produced. Perhaps, if the word remarkable were to be used in its most strict sense, and without particular reference to praise, it would be just to describe him as emphatically the most remarkable man that the political controversies of the present reign have called into power. Mr. Disraeli entered the House of Commons as Conservative member for Maidstone in 1837. He was then about thirty-two years of age. He had previously made repeated and unsuccessful attempts to get a seat in Parliament. He began his political career as an advanced Liberal, and had come out under the auspices of Daniel O'Connell and Joseph Hume. He had described himself as one who desired to fight the battle of the people, and who was supported by neither of the aristocratic parties. He failed again and again, and apparently he began to think that it would be a wiser thing to look for the support of one or other of the aristocratic parties. He had before this given indications of remarkable literary

talent, if indeed it might not be called genius. His novel, 'Vivian Grey,' published when he was in his twenty-third year, was suffused with extravagance, affectation, and mere animal spirits; but it was full of the evidences of a fresh and brilliant ability. The son of a distinguished literary man, Mr. Disraeli had probably at that time only a young literary man's notions of politics. It is not necessary to charge him with deliberate inconsistency because from having been a Radical of the most advanced views he became by an easy leap a romantic Tory. It is not likely that at the beginning of his career he had any very clear ideas in connection with the words Tory or Radical. He wrote a letter to Mr. W. J. Fox, already described as an eminent Unitarian minister and rising politician, in which he declared that his *forte* was sedition. Most clever young men who are not born to fortune, and who feel drawn into political life, fancy too that their *forte* is sedition. When young Disraeli found that sedition and even advanced Radicalism did not do much to get him into Parliament, he probably began to ask himself whether his Liberal convictions were so deeply rooted as to call for the sacrifice of a career. He thought the question over, and doubtless found himself crystallising fast into an advocate of the established order of things. In a purely personal light this was a fortunate conclusion for the ambitious young politician. He could not then have anticipated the extraordinary change which was to be wrought in the destiny and the composition of the Tory party by the eloquence, the arguments, and the



influence of two men who at that time were almost absolutely unknown. Mr. Cobden stood for the first time as a candidate for a seat in Parliament in the year that saw Mr. Disraeli elected for the first time, and Mr. Cobden was unsuccessful. Cobden had to wait four years before he found his way into the House of Commons; Bright did not become a member of Parliament until some two years later still. It was, however, the Anti-Corn Law agitation which, by conquering Peel and making him its advocate, brought about the memorable split in the Conservative party, and carried away from the cause of the country squires nearly all the men of talent who had hitherto been with them. A new or middle party of so-called Peelites was formed. Graham, Gladstone, Sidney Herbert, Cardwell, and other men of equal mark or promise, joined it, and the country party was left to seek for leadership in the earnest spirit and very moderate talents of Lord George Bentinck. Mr. Disraeli then found his chance. His genius was such that it must have made a way for him anywhere and in spite of any competition; but it is not too much to say that his career of political advancement might have been very different if in place of finding himself the only man of first-class ability in the party to which he had attached himself, he had been a member of a party which had Palmerston and Russell and Gladstone and Graham for its captains, and Cobden and Bright for its habitual supporters.

This, however, could not have been in Mr. Disraeli's thoughts when he changed from Radicalism to

Conservatism. No trace of the progress of conversion can be found in his speeches or his writings. It is not unreasonable to infer that he took up Radicalism at the beginning because it looked the most picturesque and romantic thing to do, and that only as he found it fail to answer his personal object did it occur to him that he had after all more affinity with the cause of the country gentlemen. The reputation he had made for himself before his going into Parliament was of a nature rather calculated to retard than to advance a political career. He was looked upon almost universally as an eccentric and audacious adventurer, who was kept from being dangerous by the affectations and absurdities of his conduct. He dressed in the extremest style of preposterous foppery; he talked a blending of cynicism and sentiment; he had made the most reckless statements; his boasting was almost outrageous; his rhetoric of abuse was, even in that free-spoken time, astonishingly vigorous and unrestrained. Even his literary efforts did not then receive anything like the appreciation they have obtained since. At that time they were regarded rather as audacious whimsicalities, the fantastic freaks of a clever youth, than as genuine works of a certain kind of art. Even when he did get into the House of Commons, his first experience there was little calculated to give him much hope of success. Reading over this first speech now, it seems hard to understand why it should have excited so much laughter and derision; why it should have called forth nothing but laughter and derision. It is

a clever speech, full of point and odd conceits ; very like in style and structure many of the speeches which in later years won for the same orator the applause of the House of Commons. But Mr. Disraeli's reputation had preceded him into the House. Up to this time his life had been, says an unfriendly but not an unjust critic, 'an almost uninterrupted career of follies and defeats.' The House was probably in a humour to find the speech ridiculous because the general impression was that the man himself was ridiculous. Mr. Disraeli's appearance, too, no doubt, contributed something to the contemptuous opinion which was formed of him on his first attempt to address the assembly which he afterwards came to rule. He is described by an observer as having been attired 'in a bottle-green frock coat and a waistcoat of white, of the Dick Swiveller pattern, the front of which exhibited a network of glittering chains ; large fancy-pattern pantaloons, and a black tie, above which no shirt-collar was visible, completed the outward man. A countenance lividly pale, set out by a pair of intensely black eyes, and a broad but not very high forehead, overhung by clustering ringlets of coal-black hair, which, combed away from the right temple, fell in bunches of well-oiled small ringlets over his left cheek.' His manner was intensely theatric ; his gestures were wild and extravagant. In all this there is not much, however, to surprise those who knew Mr. Disraeli in his greater days. His style was always extravagant ; his rhetoric constantly degenerated into vulgarity ; his whole manner

was that of the typical foreigner whom English people regard as the illustration of all that is vehement and unquiet. But whatever the cause, it is certain that on the occasion of his first attempt Mr. Disraeli made not merely a failure, but even a ludicrous failure. One who heard the debate thus describes the manner in which, baffled by the persistent laughter and other interruptions of the noisy House, the orator withdrew from the discussion, defeated but not discouraged. 'At last, losing his temper, which until now he had preserved in a wonderful manner, he paused in the midst of a sentence, and looking the Liberals indignantly in the face, raised his hands, and opening his mouth as widely as its dimensions would admit, said in a remarkably loud and almost terrific tone, "I have begun several times, many things and I have often succeeded at last; ay, sir, and though I sit down now, the time will come when you will hear me." ' This final prediction is so like what a manufacturer of biography would make up for a hero, and is so like what was actually said in one or two other remarkable instances, that a reader might be excused for doubting its authenticity in this case. But nothing can be more certain than the fact that Mr. Disraeli did bring to a close his maiden speech in the House of Commons with this bold prediction. The words are to be found in the reports published next morning in all the daily papers of the metropolis.

It was thus that Mr. Disraeli began his career as a Parliamentary orator. It is a curious fact that on

that occasion almost the only one of his hearers who seems to have admired the speech was Sir Robert Peel. It is by his philippic against Peel that Disraeli is now about to convince the House of Commons that the man they laughed at before is a great Parliamentary orator.

Disraeli was not in the least discouraged by his first failure. A few days after it he spoke again, and he spoke three or four times more during his first session. But he had learned some wisdom by rough experience, and he did not make his oratorical flights so long or so ambitious as that first attempt. Then he seemed after a while, as he grew more familiar with the House, to go in for being paradoxical ; for making himself always conspicuous ; for taking up positions and expounding political creeds which other men would have avoided. It is very difficult to get any clear idea of what his opinions were about this period of his career, if he had any political opinions at all. Our impression is that he really had no opinions at that time ; that he was only in quest of opinions. He spoke on subjects of which it was evident that he knew nothing, and sometimes he managed by the sheer force of a strong intelligence to discern the absurdity of economic sophistries which had baffled men of far greater experience, and which indeed, to judge from his personal declarations and political conduct afterwards, he allowed before long to baffle and bewilder himself. More often, however, he talked with a grandiose and oracular vagueness which seemed to imply that he alone of all men saw into the very

heart of the question, but that he, of all men, must not yet reveal what he saw. At his best of times Mr. Disraeli was an example of that class of being whom Macaulay declares to be so rare that Lord Chatham appears to him almost a solitary illustration of it—'a great man of real genius and of a brave, lofty and commanding spirit, without simplicity of character.' What Macaulay goes on to say of Chatham will bear quotation too. 'He was an actor in the closet, an actor at council, an actor in Parliament; and even in private society he could not lay aside his theatrical tones and attitudes.' Mr. Disraeli was at one period of his career so affected that he positively affected affectation. Yet he was a man of undoubted genius; he had a spirit that never quailed under stress of any circumstances, however disheartening; he commanded as scarcely any statesman since Chatham himself has been able to do; and it would be unjust and absurd to deny to a man gifted with qualities like these the possession of a lofty nature.

For some time Mr. Disraeli then seemed resolved to make himself remarkable—to be talked about. He succeeded admirably. He was talked about. All the political and satirical journals of the day had a great deal to say about him. He is not spoken of in terms of praise as a rule. Neither has he much praise to shower about him. Anyone who looks back to the political controversies of that time will be astounded at the language which Mr. Disraeli addresses to his opponents of the press, and which

his opponents address to him. In some cases it is no exaggeration to say that a squabble between two Billingsgate fishwomen in our day would have good chance of ending without the use of words and phrases so coarse as those which then passed between this brilliant literary man and some of his assailants. We have all read the history of the controversy between him and O'Connell, and the savage ferocity of the language with which O'Connell denounced him as 'a miscreant,' as 'a wretch,' 'a liar,' 'whose life is a living lie'; and finally as 'the heir-at-law of the blasphemous thief who died impenitent on the Cross.' Mr. Disraeli begins his reply by describing himself as one of those who 'will not be insulted even by a Yahoo without chastising it'; and afterwards, in a letter to one of Mr. O'Connell's sons, declares his desire to express 'the utter scorn in which I hold his [Mr. O'Connell's] character, and the disgust with which his conduct inspires me'; and informs the son that 'I shall take every opportunity of holding your father's name up to public contempt, and I fervently pray that you or some one of your blood may attempt to avenge the inextinguishable hatred with which I shall pursue his existence.' In reading of a controversy like this between two public men, we seem to be transported back to an age having absolutely nothing in common with our own. It appears almost impossible to believe that men still active in political life were active in political life then. Yet this is not the most astonishing specimen of the sort of controversy in which Mr. Disraeli became engaged

in his younger days. Nothing perhaps that the political literature of the time preserves could exceed the ferocity of his controversial duel with O'Connell; but there are many samples of the rhetoric of abuse to be found in the journals of the time which would far less bear exposure to the gaze of the fastidious public of our day. The duelling system survived then and for long after, and Mr. Disraeli always professed himself ready to sustain with his pistol anything that his lips might have given utterance to, even in the reckless heat of controversy. The social temper which in our time insists that the first duty of a gentleman is to apologise for an unjust or offensive expression used in debate, was unknown then. Perhaps it could hardly exist to any great extent in the company of the duelling system. When a man's withdrawal of an offensive expression might be imputed to a want of physical courage, the courtesy which impels a gentleman to atone for a wrong is not likely to triumph very often over the fear of being accounted a coward. If anyone doubts the superiority of manners as well as of morals which comes of our milder ways, he has only to read a few specimens of the controversies of Mr. Disraeli's earlier days, when men who aspired to be considered great political leaders thought it not unbecoming to call names like a costermonger, and to swagger like Bobadil or the Copper Captain.

Mr. Disraeli kept himself well up to the level of his time in the calling of names and the swaggering. But he was making himself remarkable in political



controversy as well. In the House of Commons he began to be regarded as a dangerous adversary in debate. He was wonderfully ready with retort and sarcasm. But during all the earlier part of his career he was thought of only as a free lance. He had praised Peel when Peel said something that suited him, or when to praise Peel seemed likely to wound someone else. But it was during the debates on the abolition of the Corn Laws that he first rose to the fame of a great debater and a powerful Parliamentary orator. We use the words Parliamentary orator with the purpose of conveying a special qualification. He is a great Parliamentary orator who can employ the kind of eloquence and argument which tell most readily on Parliament. But it must not be supposed that the great Parliamentary orator is necessarily a great orator in the wider sense. Some of the men who made the greatest successes as Parliamentary orators have failed to win any genuine reputations as orators of the broader and higher school. The fame of Charles Townshend's 'champagne speech' has vanished, evanescent almost as the bubbles from which it derived its inspiration and its name. No one now reads many even of the fragments preserved for us of those speeches of Sheridan which those who heard them declared to have surpassed all ancient and modern eloquence. The House of Commons often found Burke dull, and the speeches of Burke have passed into English literature secure of a perpetual place there. Mr. Disraeli never succeeded in being more than a Parliamentary orator, and pro-

bably would not have cared to be anything more. But even at this comparatively early date, and while he had still the reputation of being a whimsical, self-confident and feather-headed adventurer, he soon won for himself the name of one who could hold his own in retort and in sarcasm against any antagonist. The days of the more elaborate oratory were going by, and the time was coming when the pungent epigram, the sparkling paradox, the rattling attack, the vivid repartee, would count for the most attractive part of eloquence with the House of Commons.

Mr. Disraeli was exactly the man to succeed under the new conditions of Parliamentary eloquence. Hitherto he had wanted a cause to inspire and justify audacity, and on which to employ with effect his remarkable resources of sarcasm and rhetoric. Hitherto he had addressed an audience out of sympathy with him for the most part. Now he was about to become the spokesman of a large body of men who, chafing and almost choking with wrath, were not capable of speaking effectively for themselves. Mr. Disraeli did therefore the very wisest thing he could do when he launched at once into a savage personal attack upon Sir Robert Peel. The speech abounds in passages of audaciously powerful sarcasm. 'I am not one of the converts,' Mr. Disraeli said. 'I am perhaps a member of a fallen party. To the opinions which I have expressed in this House in favour of Protection I still adhere. They sent me to this House, and if I had relinquished them I should have relinquished my seat also.' That was the key-note of the speech. He

denounced Sir Robert Peel not for having changed his opinions, but for having retained a position which enabled him to betray his party. He compared Peel to the Lord High Admiral of the Turkish fleet, who at a great warlike crisis when he was placed at the head of the finest armament that ever left the Dardanelles since the days of Solyman the Great, steered at once for the enemy's port, and when arraigned as a traitor, said that he really saw no use in prolonging a hopeless struggle, and that he had accepted the command of the fleet only to put the Sultan out of pain by bringing the struggle to a close at once. 'Well do we remember, on this side of the House—not perhaps without a blush—the efforts we made to raise him to the bench where he now sits. Who does not remember the sacred cause of Protection for which sovereigns were thwarted, Parliament dissolved, and a nation taken in?' 'I belong to a party which can triumph no more, for we have nothing left on our side except the constituencies which we have not betrayed.' He denounced Peel as 'a man who never originates an idea; a watcher of the atmosphere; a man who takes his observations, and when he finds the wind in a particular quarter trims his sails to suit it;' and he declared that 'such a man may be a powerful minister, but he is no more a great statesman than the man who gets up behind a carriage is a great whip.'

'The opportune,' says Mr. Disraeli himself in his 'Lord George Bentinck,' 'in a popular assembly has sometimes more success than the weightiest efforts of

research and reason.' He is alluding to this very speech, of which he says with perhaps a superfluous modesty, that 'it was the long constrained passion of the House that now found a vent far more than the sallies of the speaker that changed the frigid silence of this senate into excitement and tumult.' The speech was indeed opportune. But it was opportune in a far larger sense than as a timely philippic rattling up an exhausted and disappointed House. That moment when Disraeli rose was the very turning point of the fortunes of his party. There was genius, there was positive statesmanship in seizing so boldly and so adroitly on the moment. It would have been a great thing gained for Peel if he could have got through that first night without any alarm note of opposition from his own side. The habits of Parliamentary discipline are very clinging. They are hard to tear away. Every impulse of association and training protests against the very effort to rend them asunder. A once powerful minister exercises a control over his long obedient followers somewhat like that of the heart of the Bruce in the fine old Scottish story. Those who once followed, will still obey the name and the symbol even when the actual power to lead is gone for ever. If one other night's habitude had been added to the long discipline that bound his party to Peel; if they had allowed themselves to listen to that declaration of the session's first night without murmur, perhaps they might never have rebelled. Mr. Disraeli drew together into one focus all the rays of their gathering anger against Peel,

and made them light into a flame. He showed the genius of the born leader by stepping forth at the critical moment and giving the word of command.

From that hour Mr. Disraeli was the real leader of the Tory squires ; from that moment his voice gave the word of command to the Tory party. There was peculiar courage too in the part he took. He must have known that he was open to one retort from Peel that might have crushed a less confident man. It was well known that when Peel was coming into power Disraeli expected to be offered a place of some kind in the Ministry, and would have accepted it. Mr. Disraeli afterwards explained, when Peel made allusion to the fact, that he never had put himself directly forward as a candidate for office ; but there had undoubtedly been some negotiation going forward which was conducted on Mr. Disraeli's side by someone who supposed he was doing what Disraeli would like to have done ; and Peel had not taken any hint, and would not in any way avail himself of Disraeli's services. Disraeli must have known that when he attacked Peel, the latter would hardly fail to make use of this obvious retort ; but he felt little daunted on that score. He could have made a fair enough defence of his consistency in any case, but he knew very well that what the indignant Tories wanted just then was not a man who had been uniformly consistent, but one who could attack Sir Robert Peel without scruple and with effect. Disraeli made his own career by the course

he took on that memorable night, and he also made a new career for the Tory party.

Now that he had proved himself so brilliant a *spadassin* in this debate, men began to remember that he had dealt trenchant blows before. Many of his sentences attacking Peel, which have passed into familiar quotation almost like proverbs, were spoken in 1845. He had accused the great minister of having borrowed his tactics from the Whigs. 'The right honourable gentleman caught the Whigs bathing and he walked away with their clothes. He has left them in the full enjoyment of their liberal position, and he is himself a strict conservative of their garments.' 'I look on the right honourable gentleman as a man who has tamed the shrew of Liberalism by her own tactics. He is the political Petruchio who has outbid you all.' 'If the right honourable gentleman would only stick to quotation instead of having recourse to obloquy, he may rely upon it he would find it a safer weapon. It is one he always wields with the hand of a master, and when he does appeal to any authority in prose or verse, he is sure to be successful, partly because he seldom quotes a passage that has not already received the meed of Parliamentary approbation.' We can all readily understand how such a hit as the last would tell in the case of an orator like Peel, who had the old-fashioned way of introducing long quotations from approved classic authors into his speeches, and who not unfrequently introduced citations which were received with all the better welcome by the House because of the

familiarity of their language. More fierce and cutting was the reference to Canning with whom Peel had quarrelled, and the implied contrast of Canning with Peel. Sir Robert had cited against Disraeli Canning's famous lines praying to be saved from a 'candid friend.' Disraeli seized the opportunity thus given. 'The name of Canning is one,' he said, 'never to be mentioned, I am sure, in this House without emotion. We all admire his genius; we all, or at least most of us, deplore his untimely end; and we all sympathise with him in his severe struggle with supreme prejudice and sublime mediocrity, with inveterate foes and with candid friends.' The phrase 'sublime mediocrity' had a marvellous effect. As a hostile description of Peel's character it had enough of seeming truth about it to tell most effectively alike on friends and enemies of the great leader. A friend, or even an impartial enemy, would not indeed admit that it accurately described Peel's intellect and position; but as a stroke of personal satire it touched nearly enough the characteristics of its object to impress itself at once as a master-hit on the minds of all who caught its instant purpose. The words remained in use long after the controversy and its occasion had passed away; and it was allowed that an unfriendly and bitter critic could hardly have found a phrase more suited to its ungenial purpose or more likely to connect itself at once in the public mind with the name of him who was its object. Mr. Disraeli did not in fact greatly admire Canning. He has left a very disparaging criticism of Canning as an orator in

one of his novels. On the other hand, he has shown in his 'Life of Lord George Bentinck,' that he could do full justice to some of the greatest qualities of Sir Robert Peel. But at the moment of his attacking Peel and crying up Canning he was only concerned to disparage the one, and it was on this account that he eulogised the other. The famous sentence too in which he declared that a Conservative Government was an 'organised hypocrisy,' was spoken during the debates of the Session of 1845, before the explanation of the minister on the subject of Free Trade. All these brilliant things men now began to recall. Looking back from this distance of time, we can see well enough that Mr. Disraeli had displayed his peculiar genius long before the House of Commons took the pains to recognise it. From the night of the opening of the session of 1846 it was never questioned. Thenceforward he was really the mouthpiece and the sense-carrier of his party. For some time to come indeed his nominal post might have seemed to be only that of its bravo. The country gentlemen who cheered to the echo his fierce attacks on Peel during the debates of the session of 1846, had probably not the slightest suspicion that the daring rhetorician who was so savagely revenging them on their now hated leader was a man of as cool a judgment, as long a head, and as complete a capacity for the control of a party as any politician who for generations had appeared in the House of Commons.

One immediate effect of the turn thus given by Disraeli's timely intervention in the debate was the



formation of a Protection party in the House of Commons. The leadership of this perilous adventure was entrusted to Lord George Bentinck, a sporting nobleman of energetic character, great tenacity of purpose and conviction, and a not inconsiderable aptitude for politics which had hitherto had no opportunity for either exercising or displaying itself. Lord George Bentinck had sat in eight Parliaments without taking part in any great debate. When he was suddenly drawn into the leadership of the Protection party in the House of Commons, he gave himself up to it entirely. He had at first only joined the party as one of its organisers; but he showed himself in many respects well fitted for the leadership, and the choice of leaders was in any case very limited. Once he had accepted the position he was unwearied in his attention to its duties; and indeed up to the moment of his sudden and premature death he never allowed himself any relaxation from the cares it imposed on him. Mr. Disraeli, in his 'Life of Lord George Bentinck,' has indeed overrated, with the pardonable extravagance of friendship, the intellectual gifts of his leader. Bentinck's abilities were hardly even of the second class; and the amount of knowledge which he brought to bear on the questions he discussed with so much earnestness and energy was often and of necessity little better than mere cram. But in Parliament the essential qualities of a leader are not great powers of intellect. A man of cool head, good temper, firm will, and capacity for appreciating the serviceable qualities of other men,

may, always provided that he has high birth and great social influence, make a very successful leader, even though he be wanting altogether in the higher attributes of eloquence and statesmanship. It may be doubted whether on the whole great eloquence and genius are necessary at all to the leader of a party in Parliament in times not specially troublous. Bentinck had patience, energy, good humour, and considerable appreciation of the characters of men. If he had a bad voice, was a poor speaker, talked absolute nonsense about protective duties and sugar and guano, and made up absurd calculations to prove impossibilities and paradoxes, he at least always spoke in full faith, and was only the more necessary to his party because he could honestly continue to believe in the old doctrines, no matter what political economy and hard facts might say to the contrary.

The secession was, therefore, in full course of organisation. On January 27 Sir Robert Peel came forward to explain his financial policy. It is almost superfluous to say that the most intense anxiety prevailed all over the country, and that the House was crowded. An incident of the night, which then created a profound sensation, would not be worth noticing now but for the evidence it gives of the bitterness with which the Protection party were filled, and of the curiously bad taste of which gentlemen of position and education can be guilty under the inspiration of a blind fanaticism. There is something ludicrous in the pompous tone, as of righteous indignation deliberately repressed, with which Mr.

Disraeli, in his *Life of Bentinck*, announces the event. The proceedings in the House of Commons, he says, 'were ushered in by a startling occurrence.' What was this portentous preliminary? 'His Royal Highness the Prince Consort, attended by the Master of the Horse, appeared and took his seat in the body of the House to listen to the statement of the First Minister.' In other words, there was to be a statement of great importance and a debate of profound interest, and the husband of the Queen was anxious to be a listener. The Prince Consort did not understand that because he had married the Queen he was therefore to be precluded from hearing a discussion in the House of Commons. The poorest man and the greatest man in the land were alike free to occupy a seat in one of the galleries of the House, and it is not to be wondered at if the Prince Consort fancied that he too might listen to a debate without unhinging the British Constitution. Lord George Bentinck and the Protectionists were aflame with indignation. They saw in the quiet presence of the intelligent gentleman who came to listen to the discussion an attempt to overawe the Commons and compel them to bend to the will of the Crown. It is not easy to read without a feeling of shame the absurd and unseemly comments which were made upon this harmless incident. The Queen herself has given an explanation of the Prince's visit which is straightforward and dignified. 'The Prince merely went, as the Prince of Wales and the Queen's other sons do, for once, to hear a fine debate, which is so useful to

all princes.' 'But this,' the Queen adds, 'he naturally felt unable to do again.'

The Prime Minister announced his policy. His object was to abandon the sliding scale altogether; but for the present he intended to impose a duty of ten shillings a quarter on corn when the price of it was under forty-eight shillings a quarter; to reduce that duty by one shilling for every shilling of rise in price until it reached fifty-three shillings a quarter, when the duty should fall to four shillings. This arrangement was, however, only to hold good for three years, at the end of which time protective duties on grain were to be wholly abandoned. Peel explained that he intended gradually to apply the principle of Free Trade to manufactures and every description of produce, bearing in mind the necessity of providing for the expenditure of the country, and of smoothing away some of the difficulties which a sudden withdrawal of protection might cause. The differential duties on sugar, which were professedly intended to protect the growers of free sugars against the competition of those who cultivated sugar by the use of slave labour, were to be diminished, but not abolished. The duties on the importation of foreign cattle were to be at once removed. In order to compensate the agricultural interests for the gradual withdrawal of protective duties, there were to be some readjustments of local burdens. We need not dwell much on this part of the explanation. We are familiar in late years with the ingenious manner in which the principle of the readjustment of local burdens is worked in the hope

of conciliating the agricultural interests. These readjustments are not usually received with any great gratitude or attended by any particular success. In this instance Sir Robert Peel could hardly have laid much serious stress on them. If the landowners and farmers had really any just ground of complaint in the abolition of protection, the salve which was applied to their wound would scarcely have caused them to forget its pains. The important part of the explanation, so far as history is concerned, consisted in the fact that Peel proclaimed himself an absolute convert to the Free Trade principle, and that the introduction of the principle into all departments of our commercial legislation was, according to his intention, to be a mere question of time and convenience. The struggle was to be between Protection and Free Trade.

Not that the proposals of the Ministry wholly satisfied the professed Free Traders. These latter would have enforced, if they could, an immediate application of the principle without the interval of three years, and the devices and shifts which were to be put in operation during that middle time. But of course although they pressed their protest in the form of an amendment, they had no idea of not taking what they could get when the amendment failed to secure the approval of the majority. The Protectionist amendment amounted to a distinct proposal that the policy of the Government be absolutely rejected by the House. The debate lasted for twelve nights, and at the end the Protectionists had 240 votes

against 337 given on behalf of the policy of the Government. The majority of 97 was not quite so large as the Government had anticipated ; and the result was to encourage the Protectionists in their plans of opposition. The opportunities of obstruction were many. The majority just mentioned was merely in favour of going into committee of the whole house to consider the existing Customs and Corn Acts ; but every single financial scheme which the minister had to propose must be introduced, debated and carried, if it was to be carried, as a separate bill. We shall not ask our readers to follow us into the details of these long discussions. They were not important ; they were often not dignified. They more frequently concerned themselves about the conduct and personal consistency of the minister than about the merits of his policy. The arguments in favour of protection, which doubtless seemed effective to the country gentlemen then, seem like the prattle of children now. There were, indeed, some exciting passages in the debates. For these the House was mainly indebted to the rhetoric of Mr. Disraeli. That indefatigable and somewhat reckless champion occupied himself with incessant attacks on the Prime Minister. He described Peel as 'a trader on other people's intelligence ; a political burglar of other men's ideas.' 'The occupants of the Treasury bench,' he said, were 'political pedlars, who had bought their party in the cheapest market and sold it in the dearest.' This was strong language. But it was after all more justifiable than the attempt Mr. Disraeli made to revive

an old and bitter controversy between Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Cobden, which for the sake of the former had better have been forgotten. Three years before, Mr. Edward Drummond, private secretary of Sir Robert Peel, was shot by an assassin. There could be no doubt that the victim had been mistaken for the Prime Minister himself. The assassin turned out to be a lunatic, and as such was found not guilty of the murder, and was consigned to a lunatic asylum. The event naturally had a profound effect on Sir Robert Peel, and during one of the debates on Free Trade Mr. Cobden happening to say that he would hold the Prime Minister responsible for the condition of the country, Peel, in an extraordinary burst of excitement, interpreted the words as a threat to expose him to the attack of an assassin. Nothing could be more painfully absurd; and nothing could better show the unreasoning and discreditable hatred of the Tories at that time for anyone who opposed the policy of Peel than the fact that they actually cheered their leader again and again when he made this passionate and half-frenzied charge on one of the purest and noblest men who ever sat in the English Parliament. Peel soon recovered his senses. He saw the error of which he had been guilty and regretted it; and it ought to have been consigned to forgetfulness; but Mr. Disraeli in repelling a charge made against him of indulging in unjustifiable personalities, revived the whole story and reminded the House of Commons that the Prime Minister had charged the leader of the Free Trade League with in-

citing assassins to murder him. This unjustifiable attempt to rekindle an old quarrel had, however, no other effect than to draw from Sir Robert Peel a renewed expression of apology for the charge he had made against Mr. Cobden, 'in the course of a heated debate, when I put an erroneous construction on some expressions used by the hon. member for Stockport.' Mr. Cobden declared that the explanation made by Peel was entirely satisfactory, and expressed his hope that no one on either side of the House would attempt to revive the subject or make further allusion to it.

The Government prevailed. It would be superfluous to go into any details as to the progress of the Corn Bill. Enough to say that the third reading of the bill passed the House of Commons on May 15, by a majority of 98 votes. The bill was at once sent up to the House of Lords, and by means chiefly of the earnest advice of the Duke of Wellington, was carried through that House without much serious opposition. But June 25, the day when the bill was read for a third time in the House of Lords, was a memorable day in the Parliamentary annals of England. It saw the fall of the Ministry who had carried to success the greatest piece of legislation that had been introduced since Lord Grey's Reform Bill.

A Coercion Bill for Ireland was the measure which brought this catastrophe on the Government of Sir Robert Peel. While the Corn Bill was yet passing through the House of Commons the Government felt called upon, in consequence of the condition of crime



and outrage in Ireland, to introduce a Coercion Bill. Lord George Bentinck at first gave the measure his support; but during the Whitsuntide recess he changed his views. He now declared that he had only supported the bill on the assurance of the Government that it was absolutely necessary for the safety of life in Ireland, and that as the Government had not pressed it on in advance of every other measure—especially no doubt of the Corn Bill—he could not believe that it was really a matter of imminent necessity; and that furthermore he had no longer any confidence in the Government, and could not trust them with extraordinary powers. In truth the bill was placing the Government in a serious difficulty. All the Irish followers of O'Connell would of course oppose the coercion measure. The Whigs when out of office have usually made it a rule to oppose coercion bills if they do not come accompanied with some promises of legislative reform and concession. The English Radical members, Mr. Cobden and his followers, were almost sure to oppose it. Under these circumstances, it seemed probable enough that if the Protectionists joined with the other opponents of the Coercion Bill, the Government must be defeated. The temptation was too great. As Mr. Disraeli himself candidly says of his party, 'vengeance had succeeded in most breasts to the more sanguine sentiment. The field was lost, but at any rate there should be retribution for those who had betrayed it.' The question with many of the indignant Protectionists was, as Mr. Disraeli himself puts it, 'How was Sir Robert

Peel to be turned out?' It soon became evident that he could be turned out by those who detested him and longed for vengeance voting against him on the Coercion Bill. This was done. The fiercer Protectionists voted with the Free Traders, the Whigs, and the Irish Catholic and Liberal members, and after a debate of much bitterness and passion, the division on the second reading of the Coercion Bill took place on Thursday, June 25, and the Ministry were left in a minority of 73. Two hundred and nineteen votes only were given for the second reading of the bill, and 292 against it. Some eighty of the Protectionists followed Lord George Bentinck into the lobby to vote against the bill, and their votes settled the question. Mr. Disraeli has given a somewhat pompous description of the scene 'as the Protectionists passed in defile before the minister to the hostile lobby.' 'Pallas te hoc vulnere, Pallas immolat,' cries the hero of the *Æneid*, as he plunges his sword into the heart of his rival. 'Protection kills you; not your Coercion Bill,' the irreconcilable Protectionists might have said as they trooped past the minister. Chance had put within their grasp the means of vengeance, and they had seized it, and made successful use of it. The Peel Ministry had fallen in its very hour of triumph.

Three days after Sir Robert Peel announced his resignation of office. His speech 'was considered one of glorification and pique,' says Mr. Disraeli. It does not so impress most readers. It appears to have been full of dignity, and of emotion, not usual with Peel,

but not surely under the circumstances incompatible with dignity. It contained that often-quoted tribute to the services of a former opponent, in which Peel declared that 'the name which ought to be, and which will be, associated with the success of these measures is the name of the man who, acting, I believe, from pure and disinterested motives, has advocated their cause with untiring energy and with appeals to reason enforced by an eloquence the more to be admired because it is unaffected and unadorned—the name of Richard Cobden.' An added effect was given to this well-deserved panegyric by the little irregularity which the Prime Minister committed when he mentioned in debate a member by name. The closing sentence of the speech was eloquent and touching. Many would censure him, Peel said; his name would perhaps be execrated by the monopolist who would maintain protection for his own individual benefit; 'but it may be that I shall leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of good will in those places which are the abode of men whose lot it is to labour and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow—a name remembered with expressions of good will when they shall recreate their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it is no longer leavened with a sense of injustice.'

The great minister fell. So great a success followed by so sudden and complete a fall is hardly recorded in the Parliamentary history of our modern times. Peel had crushed O'Connell and carried Free

Trade, and O'Connell and the Protectionists had life enough yet to pull him down. He is as a conqueror who having won the great victory of his life is struck by a hostile hand in some by-way as he passes home to enjoy his triumph.

## CHAPTER XVII.

FAMINE, COMMERCIAL TROUBLE, AND FOREIGN  
INTRIGUE.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL succeeded Sir Robert Peel as First Lord of the Treasury ; Lord Palmerston became Foreign Secretary ; Sir Charles Wood was Chancellor of the Exchequer ; Lord Grey took charge of the Colonies ; and Sir George Grey was Home Secretary. Mr. Macaulay accepted the office of Paymaster-General, with a seat in the Cabinet, a distinction not usually given to the occupant of that office. The Ministry was not particularly strong in administrative talent. The Premier and the Foreign Secretary were the only members of the Cabinet who could be called statesmen of the first class ; and even Lord Palmerston had not as yet won more than a somewhat doubtful kind of fame, and was looked upon as a man quite as likely to do mischief as good to any Ministry of which he might happen to form a part. Lord Grey then and since only succeeded somehow in missing the career of a leading statesman. He had great talents and some originality ; he was independent and bold. But his independence degenerated too often into impracticability and even eccentricity ; and he was, in fact, a politician with whom ordinary men

could not work. Sir Charles Wood, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, had solid sense and excellent administrative capacity, but he was about as bad a public speaker as ever addressed the House of Commons. His budget speeches were often made so unintelligible by defective manner and delivery that they might almost as well have been spoken in a foreign language. Sir George Grey was a speaker of fearful fluency, and a respectable administrator of the second or third class. He was as plodding in administration as he was precipitate of speech.

‘Peel,’ wrote Lord Palmerston to a friend a short time after the formation of the new Ministry, ‘seems to have made up his mind that for a year or two he cannot hope to form a party, and that he must give people a certain time to forget the events of last year; in the meanwhile, it is evident that he does not wish that any other Government should be formed out of the people on his side of the House, because of that Government he would not be a member. For these reasons, and also because he sincerely thinks it best that we should, for the present, remain in, he gives us very cordial support, as far as he can without losing his independent position. Graham, who sits up under his old pillar, and never comes down to Peel’s bench even for personal communication, seems to keep himself aloof from everybody, and to hold himself free to act according to circumstances; but as yet he is not considered as the head of any party. George Bentinck has entirely broken down as a candidate for ministerial position; and thus we are left

masters of the field, not only on account of our own merits, which, though we say it ourselves, are great, but by virtue of the absence of any efficient competitors.' Palmerston's humorous estimate of the state of affairs was accurate. The new Ministry was safe enough, because there was no party in a condition to compete with it.

The position of the Government of Lord John Russell was not one to be envied. The Irish famine occupied all attention, and soon seemed to be an evil too great for any Ministry to deal with. The failure of the potato was an overwhelming disaster for a people almost wholly agricultural and a peasantry long accustomed to live upon that root alone. Ireland contains very few large towns; when the names of four or five are mentioned the list is done with, and we have to come to mere villages. The country has hardly any manufactures except that of linen in the northern province. In the south and west the people live by agriculture alone. The cottier system, which prevailed almost universally in three of the four provinces, was an arrangement by which a man obtained in return for his labour a right to cultivate a little patch of ground, just enough to supply him with food for the scanty maintenance of his family. The great landlords were for the most part absentees; the smaller landlords were often deeply in debt, and were therefore compelled to screw every possible penny of rent out of their tenants-at-will. They had not, however, even that regularity and order in their exactions that might at least have forced upon the

tenants some habits of forethought and exactness. There was a sort of understanding that the rent was always to be somewhat in arrear; the supposed kindness of a landlord consisted in his allowing the indebtedness to increase more liberally than others of his class would do. There was a demoralising slatternliness in the whole system. It was almost certain that if a tenant by greatly increased industry and good fortune made the land which he held more valuable than before, his rent would at once be increased. On the other hand, it was held an act of tyranny to dispossess him so long as he made even any fair promise of paying up. There was, therefore, a thoroughly vicious system established all round, demoralising alike to the landlord and the tenant.

Underlying all the relations of landlord and tenant in Ireland were two great facts. The occupation of land was virtually a necessity of life to the Irish tenant. That is the first fact. The second is that the land system under which Ireland was placed was one entirely foreign to the traditions, the ideas, one might say the very genius of the Irish people. Whether the system introduced by conquest and confiscation was better than the old one or not does not in the slightest degree affect the working of this fact on the relations between the landlord and the tenant in Ireland. No one will be able to understand the whole meaning and bearing of the long land struggle in Ireland who does not clearly get into his mind the fact that, rightly or wrongly, the Irish peasant regarded the right to have a bit of land, his



share, exactly as other peoples regard the right to live. It was in his mind something elementary and self-evident. He could not be loyal to, he could not even understand, any system which did not secure that to him. According to Michelet the land is the French peasant's mistress. It was the Irish peasant's life.

The Irish peasant with his wife and his family lived on the potato. Hardly in any country coming within the pale of civilisation was there to be found a whole peasant population dependent for their living on one single root. When the potato failed in 1845 the life-system of the people seemed to have given way. At first it was not thought that the failure must necessarily be anything more than partial. But it soon began to appear that for at least two seasons the whole food of the peasant population and of the poor in towns was absolutely gone. Lord John Russell's Government pottered with the difficulty rather than encountered it. In their excuse it has to be said of course that the calamity they had to meet was unprecedented and that it must have tried the resources of the most energetic and foreseeing statesmanship. Still the fact remains that the measures of the Government were at first utterly inadequate to the occasion, and that afterwards some of them were even calculated to make bad worse. Not a county in Ireland wholly escaped the potato disease, and many of the southern and western counties were soon in actual famine. A peculiar form of fever—famine-fever it was called—began to show itself

everywhere. A terrible dysentery set in as well. In some districts the people died in hundreds daily from fever, dysentery, or sheer starvation. The districts of Skibbereen, Skull, Westport and other places obtained a ghastly supremacy in misery. In some of these districts the parochial authorities at last declined to put the ratepayers to the expense of coffins for the too frequent dead. The coroners declared it impossible to keep on holding inquests. There was no time for all the ceremonies of that kind that would have to be gone through if they made any pretence at keeping up the system of ordinary seasons. In other places where the formula was still kept up the juries added to their verdicts of death by starvation some charge of wilful murder against Lord John Russell or the Lord Lieutenant or some other official whose supposed neglect was set down as the cause of the death. Unfortunately the Government had to show an immense activity in the introduction of Coercion Bills and other repressive measures. It would have been impossible that in such a country as Ireland a famine of that gigantic kind should set in without bringing crimes of violence along with it. The peasantry had always hated the land tenure system; they had always been told, not surely without justice, that it was at the bottom of all their miseries; they were now under the firm conviction that the Government could have saved them if it would. What wonder then if there were bread riots and agrarian disturbances? Who can now wonder, that being so, that the Government introduced exceptional measures

of repression? But it certainly had a grim and a disheartening effect on the spirits of the Irish people when it seemed as if the Government could only potter and palter with famine, but could be earnest and energetic when devising coercion bills.

Whatever might be said of the Government, no one could doubt the good will of the English people. In every great English community from the metropolis downwards subscription lists were opened and the most liberal contributions poured in. In Liverpool, for example, a great number of the merchants of the place put down a thousand pounds each. The Quakers of England sent over a delegation of their number to the specially famine-stricken districts of Ireland to administer relief. Many other sects and bodies followed the example. National Relief Associations were specially formed in England. Relief indeed began to be poured in from all countries. The United States employed some of their war vessels to send gifts of grain and other food to the starving places. In one Irish seaport the joy-bells of the town were kept ringing all day in honour of the arrival of one of these grain-laden vessels—a mournfully significant form of rejoicing surely. One of the national writers said at the time that the misery of Ireland touched ‘even the heart of the Turk at the far Dardanelles, and he sent her in pity the alms of a beggar.’ It was true that from Turkey as from most other countries had come some contribution towards the relief of Irish distress. At the same time there were some very foolish performances gone through in

Dublin under the sanction and patronage of the Lord Lieutenant ; the solemn 'inauguration,' as it would be called by a certain class of writers now, of a public soup kitchen, devised and managed by the fashionable French cook M. Soyer, for the purpose of showing the Irish people what remarkably sustaining *potage* might be made out of the thinnest and cheapest materials. This exposition would have been well enough in a quiet and practical way, but performed as a grand national ceremony of regeneration, under the patronage of the Viceroy, and with accompaniment of brass-bands and pageantry, it had a remarkably foolish and even offensive aspect. The performance was resented bitterly by many of the impatient young spirits of the national party in Dublin.

Meanwhile the misery went on deepening and broadening. It was far too great to be effectually encountered by subscriptions however generous ; and the Government, meaning to do the best they could, were practically at their wits' end. The starving peasants streamed into the nearest considerable town hoping for relief there, and found too often that there the very sources of charity were dried up. Many, very many, thus disappointed, merely lay down on the pavement and died there. Along the country roads one met everywhere groups of gaunt dim-eyed wretches clad in miserable old sacking and wandering aimlessly with some vague idea of finding food, as the boy in the fable hoped to find the gold, where the rainbow touched the earth. Many remained in their empty hovels and took death there when he

came. In some regions the country seemed unpeopled for miles. A fervid national writer declared that the impression made on him by the aspect of the country then was that of 'one silent vast dissolution.' Allowing for rhetoric, there was not much exaggeration in the words. Certainly the Ireland of tradition was dissolved in the operation of that famine. The old system gave way utterly. The landlordism of the days before the famine never revived in its former strength and its peculiar ways. For the landlord class there came out of the famine the Encumbered Estates Court ; for the small farmer and peasant class there floated up the American emigrant ship.

Acts and even conspiracies of violence, as we have said, began to be not uncommon throughout the country and in the cities. One peculiar symptom of the time was the glass-breaking mania that set in throughout the towns of the south and west. It is perhaps not quite reasonable to call it a mania, for it had melancholy method in it. The workhouses were overcrowded and the authorities could not receive there or feed there one-fourth of the applicants who besieged them. Suddenly it seemed to occur to the minds of many of famine's victims that there were the prisons for which one might qualify himself, and to which, after qualification, he could not be denied admittance. The idea was simple : go into a town, smash deliberately the windows of a shop, and some days of a gaol and of substantial food must follow. The plan became a favourite. Especially was it adopted by young girls and women. After a time the

puzzled magistrates resolved to put an end to this device by refusing to inflict the punishment which these unfortunate creatures sought as a refuge and a comfort. One early result of the famine and the general breakdown of property is too significant to be allowed to pass unnoticed. Some of the landlords had been living for a long time on a baseless system, on a credit which the failure of the crops brought to a crushing test. Not a few of these were utterly broken. They could maintain their houses and halls no longer, and often were only too happy to let them to the poor law guardians to be used as extra workhouses. In the near neighbourhood of many a distressed country town the great house of the local magnate thus became a receptacle for the pauperism which could not find a refuge in the overcrowded asylums which the poor law system had already provided. The lion and the lizard, says the Persian poet, keep the halls where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep. The pauper devoured his scanty dole of Indian meal porridge in the hall where his landlord had gloried and drunk deep.

When the famine was over and its results came to be estimated, it was found that Ireland had lost about two millions of her population. She had come down from eight millions to six. This was the combined effect of starvation, of the various diseases that followed in its path gleaning where it had failed to gather, and of emigration. Long after all the direct effects of the failure of the potato had ceased, the population still continued steadily to decrease. The Irish peasant had

in fact had his eyes turned, as Mr. Bright afterwards expressed it, towards the setting sun, and for long years the stream of emigration westward never abated in its volume. A new Ireland began to grow up across the Atlantic. In every great city of the United States the Irish element began to form a considerable constituent of the population. From New York to San Francisco, from St. Paul, Minnesota, to New Orleans, the Irish accent is heard in every street, and the Irish voter comes to the polling-booth ready, far too heedlessly, to vote for any politician who will tell him that America loves the green flag and hates the Saxon.

Terrible as the immediate effects of the famine were, it is impossible for any friend of Ireland to say that on the whole it did not bring much good with it. It first applied the scourge which was to drive out of the land a thoroughly vicious and rotten system. It first called the attention of English statesmen irresistibly to the fact that the system was bad to its heart's core, and that nothing good could come of it. It roused the attention of the humble Irishman, too often inclined to put up with everything in the lazy spirit of a Neapolitan or a fatalist, to the fact that there was for him too a world elsewhere. The famine had indeed many a bloody afterbirth; but it gave to the world a new Ireland.

The Government, as it may be supposed, had hard work to do all this time. They had the best intentions towards Ireland, and were always indeed announcing that they had found out some new way of dealing with the distress, and modifying or withdraw-

ing old plans. They adopted measures from time to time to expend large sums in something like systematic employment for the poor in Ireland; they modified the Irish Poor Laws; they agreed at length to suspend temporarily the Corn Laws and the Navigation Laws, so far as these related to the importation of grain. A tremendous commercial panic, causing the fall of great houses, especially in the corn trade, all over the country, called for the suspension of the Bank Charter Act of 1844, and the measures of the ministers were for the most part treated considerately and loyally by Sir Robert Peel; but a new opposition had formed itself under the nominal guidance of Lord George Bentinck, and the real inspiration of Mr. Disraeli. Lord George Bentinck brought in a bill to make a grant of sixteen millions to be expended as an advance on the construction and completion of Irish railways. This proposal was naturally very welcome to many in Ireland. It had a lavish and showy air about it; and Lord George Bentinck talked grandiosely in his speech about the readiness with which he, the Saxon, would, if his measure were carried, answer with his head for the loyalty of the Irish people. But it soon began to appear that the scheme was not so much a question of the Irish people as of certain moneyed classes who might be helped along at the expense of the English and the Irish people. Lord George Bentinck certainly had no other than a direct and single-minded purpose to do good to Ireland; but his measure would have been a failure if it had been carried. It was fairly



open in some respects to the criticism of Mr. Roebuck that it proposed to relieve Irish landlordism of its responsibilities at the expense of the British taxpayer. The measure was rejected. Lord George Bentinck was able to worry the Ministry somewhat effectively when they introduced a measure to reduce gradually the differential duties on sugar for a few years, and then replace these duties by a fixed and uniform rate. This was in short a proposal to apply the principle of Free Trade, instead of that of Protection, to sugar. The protective principle had, in this case, however, a certain fascination about it, even for independent minds; for an exceptional protection had been retained by Sir Robert Peel in order to enable the planters in our colonies to compensate themselves for the loss they might suffer in the transition from slavery to free labour. Lord George Bentinck therefore proposed an amendment to the resolutions of the Government, declaring it unjust and impolitic to reduce the duty on foreign slave-grown sugar, as tending to check the advance of production by British free labour, and to give a great additional stimulus to slave labour. Many sincere and independent opponents of slavery, Lord Brougham in the House of Lords among them, were caught by this view of the question. Lord George and his brilliant lieutenant at one time appeared as if they were likely to carry their point in the Commons. But it was announced that if the resolutions of the Government were defeated ministers would resign, and there was no one to take their place. Peel could not return to power;

and the time was far distant yet when Mr. Disraeli could form a Ministry. The opposition crumbled away therefore, and the Government measures were carried. Lord George Bentinck made himself for a while the champion of the West India sugar-producing interest. He was a man who threw himself with enormous energy into any work he undertook; and he had got up the case of the West India planters with all the enthusiasm that inspired him in his more congenial pursuits as one of the principal men on the turf. The alliance between him and Mr. Disraeli is curious. The two men, one would think, could have had absolutely nothing in common. Mr. Disraeli knew nothing about horses and racing. Lord George Bentinck could not possibly have understood, not to say sympathised with, many of the leading ideas of his lieutenant. Yet Bentinck had evidently formed a just estimate of Disraeli's political genius; and Disraeli saw that in Bentinck were many of the special qualities which go to make a powerful party leader in England. Time has amply justified and more than justified Bentinck's convictions as to Disraeli; Bentinck's premature death leaves Disraeli's estimate of him an untested speculation.

There were troubles abroad as well as at home for the Government. Almost immediately on their coming into office, the project of the Spanish Marriages, concocted between King Louis Philippe and his minister, M. Guizot, disturbed for a time and very seriously the good understanding between England and France. It might so far as this country was concerned have had

much graver consequences, but for the fact that it bore its bitter fruits so soon for the dynasty of Louis Philippe, and helped to put a new ruler on the throne of France. It is only as it affected the friendly feeling between this country and France that the question of the Spanish marriages has a place in such a work as this; but at one time it seemed likely enough to bring about consequences which would link it closely and directly with the history of England. The ambition of the French minister and his master was to bring the throne of Spain in some way under the direct influence of France. Such a scheme had again and again been at the heart of French rulers and statesmen, and it had always failed. At least it had always brought with it jealousy, hostility and war. Louis Philippe and his minister were untaught by the lessons of the past. The young Queen Isabella of Spain was unmarried, and of course a high degree of public anxiety existed in Europe as to her choice of a husband. No delusion can be more profound or more often exposed than that which inspires ambitious princes and enterprising statesmen to imagine that they can control nations by the influence of dynastic alliances. In every European war we see princes closely connected by marriage in arms against each other. The great political forces which bring nations into the field of battle are not to be charmed into submission by the rubbing of a princess's wedding ring. But a certain class of statesman, a man of the order who in ordinary life would be called too clever by half, is always in-

triguing about royal marriages as if thus alone he could hold in his hands the destinies of nations.

In an evil hour for themselves and their fame, Louis Philippe and his minister believed that they could obtain a virtual ownership of Spain by an ingenious marriage scheme. There was at one time a project talked of rather than actually entertained, of marrying the young Queen of Spain and her sister to the Duc d'Aumale and the Duc de Montpensier, both sons of Louis Philippe. But this would have been too daring a venture on the part of the King of the French. Apart from any objections to be entertained by other states, it was certain that England could not 'view with indifference,' as the diplomatic phrase goes, the prospect of a son of the French King occupying the throne of Spain. It may be said that after all it was of little concern to England who married the Queen of Spain. Spain was nothing to us. It would not follow that Spain must be the tool of France because the Spanish Queen married a son of the French King, any more than it was certain in a former day that Austria must link herself with the fortunes of the great Napoleon because he had married an Austrian princess. Probably it would have been well if England had concerned herself in no wise with the domestic affairs of Spain, and had allowed Louis Philippe to spin what ignoble plots he pleased, if the Spanish people themselves had not wit enough to see through, and power enough to counteract them. At a later period France brought on herself a terrible war and a crushing defeat because her Emperor chose

to believe, or allowed himself to be persuaded into believing, that the security of France would be threatened if a Prussian prince were called to the throne of Spain. The Prussian prince did not ascend that throne; but the war between France and Prussia went on; France was defeated; and after a little the Spanish people themselves got rid of the prince whom they had consented to accept in place of the obnoxious Prussian. If the French Emperor had not interfered, it is only too probable that the Prussian prince would have gone to Madrid, reigned there for a few unstable and tremulous months, and then have been quietly sent back to his own country. But at the time of Louis Philippe's intrigues about the Spanish marriages, the statesmen of England were by no means disposed to take a cool and philosophic view of things. The idea of non-intervention had scarcely come up then, and the English minister who was chiefly concerned in foreign affairs was about the last man in the world to admit that anything could go on in Europe or elsewhere in which England was not entitled to express an opinion, and to make her influence felt. The marriage, therefore, of the young Queen of Spain had been long a subject of anxious consideration in the councils of the English Government. Louis Philippe knew very well that he could not venture to marry one of his sons to the young Isabella. But he and his minister devised a scheme for securing to themselves and their policy the same effect in another way. They contrived that the Queen and her sister should be married at the same

time—the Queen to her cousin, Don Francisco d'Assis, Duke of Cadiz ; and her sister to the Duke de Montpensier, Louis Philippe's son. There was reason to expect that the Queen, if married to Don Francisco, would have no children, and that the wife of Louis Philippe's son, or some of her children, would come to the throne of Spain.

On the moral guilt of a plot like this it would be superfluous to dwell. Nothing in the history of the perversions of human conscience and judgment can be more extraordinary than the fact that a man like M. Guizot should have been its inspiring influence. It came with a double shock upon the Queen of England and her ministers, because they had every reason to think that Louis Philippe had bound himself by a solemn promise to discourage any such policy. When the Queen paid her visit to Louis Philippe at Eu, the king made the most distinct and the most spontaneous promise on the subject both to her Majesty and to Lord Aberdeen. The Queen's own journal says : ' The King told Lord Aberdeen as well as me he never would hear of Montpensier's marriage with the Infanta of Spain—which they are in a great fright about in England—until it was no longer a political question, which would be when the Queen is married and has children.' The King's own defence of himself afterwards, in a letter intended to be a reply to one written to his daughter, the Queen of the Belgians, by Queen Victoria, admits the fact. ' I shall tell you precisely,' he says, ' in what consists the deviation on my side. Simply in my having

arranged for the marriage of the Duc de Montpensier, not before the marriage of the Queen of Spain, for she is to be married to the Duc de Cadiz at the very moment when my son is married to the Infanta, but before the Queen has a child. That is the whole deviation, nothing more, nothing less.' This was surely deviation enough from the King's promise to justify any charge of bad faith that could be made. The whole question was one of succession. The objection of England and other Powers was from first to last an objection to any arrangement which might leave the succession to one of Louis Philippe's children or grandchildren. For this reason the King had given his word to Queen Victoria that he would not hear of his son's marriage with Isabella's sister until the difficulty about the succession had been removed by Isabella herself being married and having a child. Such an agreement was absolutely broken when the King arranged for the marriage of his son to the sister of Queen Isabella at the same time as Isabella's own marriage, and when, therefore, it was not certain that the young Queen would have any children. The political question, the question of succession, remained then open as before. All the objections that England and other Powers had to the marriage of the Duc de Montpensier stood out as strong as ever. It was a question of the birth of a child, and no child was born. The breach of faith was made infinitely more grave by the fact that in the public opinion of Europe Louis Philippe was set down as having brought about the marriage of the

Queen of Spain with her cousin Don Francisco in the hope and belief that the union would be barren of issue, and that the wife of his son would stand on the next step of the throne.

The excuse which Louis Philippe put forward to palliate what he called his 'deviation' from the promise to the Queen was not of a nature calculated to allay the ill-feeling which his policy had aroused in England. He pleaded in substance that he had reason to believe in an intended piece of treachery on the part of the English Government, the consequences of which, if it were successful, would have been injurious to his policy, and the discovery of which, therefore, released him from his promise. He had found out, as he declared, that there was an intention on the part of England to put forward as a candidate for the hand of Queen Isabella, Prince Leopold of Coburg, a cousin of Prince Albert. There was so little justification for any such suspicion that it hardly seems possible a man of Louis Philippe's shrewdness can really have entertained it. The English Government had always steadfastly declined to give any support whatever to the candidature of this young prince. Lord Aberdeen, who was then Foreign Secretary, had always taken his stand on the broad principle that the marriage of the Queen of Spain was the business of Isabella herself and of the Spanish people, and that so long as that Queen and that people were satisfied, and the interests of England were in no wise involved, the Government of Queen Victoria would interfere in no manner. The can-



didature of Prince Leopold had been in the first instance a project of the Dowager Queen of Spain, Christina, a woman of intriguing character, on whose political probity no great reliance could be placed. The English Government had in the most decided and practical manner proved that they took no share in the plans of Queen Christina, and had no sympathy with them. But while the whole negotiations were going on, the defeat of Sir Robert Peel's Ministry brought Lord Palmerston into the Foreign Office in place of Lord Aberdeen. The very name of Palmerston produced on Louis Philippe and his minister the effect vulgarly said to be wrought on a bull by the display of a red rag. Louis Philippe treasured in bitter memory the unexpected success which Palmerston had won from him in regard to Turkey and Egypt. At that time, and especially in the court of Louis Philippe, foreign politics were looked upon as the field in which the ministers of great Powers contended against each other with brag and trickery and subtle arts of all kinds ; the plain principles of integrity and truthful dealing did not seem to be regarded as properly belonging to the rules of the game. Louis Philippe probably believed in good faith that the return of Lord Palmerston to the Foreign Office must mean the renewed activity of treacherous plans against himself. This at least is the only assumption on which we can explain the King's conduct, if we do not wish to believe that he put forward excuses and pretexts which were wilful in their falsehood. Louis Philippe seized on some words in a despatch

of Lord Palmerston's, in which the candidature of Prince Leopold was simply mentioned as a matter of fact; declared that these words showed that the English Government had at last openly adopted that candidature, professed himself relieved from all previous engagements, and at once hurried on the marriage between Queen Isabella and her cousin, and that of his own son with Isabella's sister. On October 10, 1846, the double marriage took place at Madrid; and on February 5 following M. Guizot told the French Chambers that the Spanish marriages constituted the first great thing France had accomplished completely single-handed in Europe since 1830.

Everyone knows what a failure this scheme proved, so far as the objects of Louis Philippe and his minister were concerned. Queen Isabella had children; Montpensier's wife did not come to the throne; and the dynasty of Louis Philippe fell before long, its fall undoubtedly hastened by the position of utter isolation and distrust in which it was placed by the scheme of the Spanish marriages and the feelings which it provoked in Europe. The fact with which we have to deal, however, is that the friendship between England and France, from which so many happy results seemed likely to come to Europe and the cause of free government, was necessarily interrupted. It would have been impossible to trust any longer to Louis Philippe. The Queen herself entered into a correspondence with his daughter, the Queen of the Belgians, in which she expressed in the clearest

and the most emphatic manner her opinion of the treachery with which England had been encountered, and suggested plainly enough her sense of the moral wrong involved in such ignoble policy. The whole transaction is but another and a most striking condemnation of that odious creed, for a long time tolerated in statecraft, that there is one moral code for private life and another for the world of politics. A man who in private affairs should act as Louis Philippe and M. Guizot acted would be justly considered infamous. It is impossible to suppose that M. Guizot at least could have so acted in private life. M. Guizot was a Protestant of a peculiarly austere type, who professed to make religious duty his guide in all things, and who doubtless did make it so in all his dealings as a private citizen. But it is only too evident that he believed the policy of states to allow of other principles than those of Christian morality. He allowed himself to be governed by the odious delusion that the interests of a state can be advanced and ought to be pursued by means which an ordinary man of decent character would scorn to employ for any object in private life. A man of any high principle would not employ such arts in private life to save all his earthly possessions and his life and the lives of his wife and children. Anyone who will take the trouble to think over the whole of this plot, for it can be called by no other name, over the ignoble object which it had in view, the base means by which it was carried out, the ruthless disregard for the inclinations, the affections, the happiness, and the

morality of its principal victims ; and will then think of it as carried on in private life in order to come at the reversion of some young and helpless girl's inheritance, will perhaps find it hard to understand how the shame can be any the less because the principal plotter was a king, and the victims were a queen and a nation.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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